

The Sin of Idolatry

By Rashid Alamir

Disclaimer: Religion is all about the Truth. Truth is God. It is my strong belief that anything that does not conform to the truth when it comes to God should be exposed and given the boot. If you are one of those who have blind beliefs in your religion and its ways, whatever they are, then this article is not for you. This article is for those for are in the search of the true God and his ways.

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Introduction

Idol worship more popularly known as Idolatry is the most prevalent act committed today. What the Bible characterizes as the greatest of all sins and the only unforgivable sin is the most widely committed sin in the world. The Indo-Chinese oriented religions of eastern Asia are the main culprits in this regard. Religions like Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, Taoism, Shintoism, Chondoism and Confucianism are main religions propagating idolatry as the "Door to Heaven".

In the Judeo-Christian religions Idolatry is the mother of all sins. In Islam, it is considered Shirk and the only unforgivable sin. The Sikh religion strongly prohibits idolatry. Yet all of these religions are widely engrossed in committing idolatry. Sikh homes have more idol gods than even Hindu homes today. Muslims are widely engaged in worshipping dead bodies of saints and wearing pendants as good luck charms. Christians are guilty of worshipping Mary and the saints.

I have especially written this article for Christians who indulge in the sinful habit of idolatry either knowingly or unknowingly. During my recent visit to the south Indian states of Kerala and Tamil Nadu, I was horrified to see many Christians worshipping non-Christian deities and idols either in their homes or in the village temples. It came to my light that many of these Christians also annually make pilgrimages to non-Christian devotional centers to invoke the deity's blessings. It seems that most of the Christians who indulge in this are either traditional Christians (Christians born in to the religion as a result of their parents being Christian) who have never really experienced Christ or are newly converted Christians who have been unable to forget their pagan past.

Hopefully after reading this article, we hope that they will retract their steps from worshipping Idolatry and start walking towards the true light of God which comes through Jesus Christ alone.

What is Idolatry?

Idolatry is the worship of Idols. What is an Idol? An idol is an object of passionate devotion. It is something that is worshiped and loved as a god. An idol is something in a person's life that takes the place of the true God. An idol is a person or thing that becomes a SUBSTITUTE for God. Idols could be actual works of Stone carved in the form of an image or they could be tangible stuff like money, fellow humans, god man, animals, material possessions, etc or even abstract things like mythology, TV programs, movies, pornography, etc.

When does an image become a god? The early Christian apologist Minucius Felix had an answer. A log "is cut, is hewn, is planed," and is still no god. A stone "is sculptured, and is polished by some abandoned man" and still is no god. A sculpture "is set up, and even yet it is not a god." But, "lo, it is adorned, it is consecrated, it is prayed to - then at length it is a god, when man has chosen it to be so, and for the purpose has dedicated it." It is from here that idolatry starts.

Idol worship is sometimes referred to as "star worshiping," because the original concept of idol worship began thousands of years ago when people began worshiping stars in the sky instead of God. They figured, "Well, if God created them to demonstrate His power, they must be quite powerful themselves!" And they would stand outdoors at night and worship the stars as mighty knights of God. From outdoor ceremonies it went to indoor ceremonies, and from indoor ceremonies it went to indoor ceremonies using stone or wooden symbols of the stars and their "powers," which were worshiped as "representatives" of the stars. Over the years, the stars were gradually forgotten, and the symbols themselves began to be viewed as self-contained powers in their own right, creating the concept of idols and idol worship. Ceremonies ever increasing in complexity were built up around the idols and their indoor housings, and they soon spawned whole cultures, which regularly worshiped these man-made physical objects as gods.

What does idol worship mean today? Idol worship begins in the mind—it starts with an incorrect perception of God. It says you can turn an abstract God into a concrete or wooden or plastic image, which of course, is impossible. Idol worship doesn't just mean singing and dancing and bowing in front of statues - it means believing in any force, object or item outside of the infinite God himself: an angel, a constellation, a force of nature, a living creature - or a statue. Everything is created by God, and to designate any piece of physical matter as "God" or a "Higher Power" is idol worship.

Idol worship is something that is greatly misunderstood by many people. Often people consider themselves innocent, but others guilty, all because of their perspective. Catholics worship and bow down before statues of Mary and their Saints and yet scream that they are not idol worshippers. Muslims regularly indulge in dargah worship and yet will claim not to indulge in

idolatry. Buddhists bow down, worship and pray to statues of Buddha. Hindus are the masters of Idol worship. If this is not idolatry then pray tell me what is?

Maimonides is very clear with his definition of idolatry, and idolatry is *not* confined to worshipping object while presuming that they have divine powers. It also includes looking at them as mediums to God or holding them in honor and glory due to God in our hearts. As the Torah is the Law, the commandments that Moses brought from Sinai make it clear from the outset that no other entities are to be worshipped, and no images are to be made for the purpose of worshipping them.

Do Christians worship idols when they worship a statue of Jesus or pray before a Crucifix? No. Christians do not worship a cross, but the cross is a symbol that interjects the Christian teaching that Jesus Christ was the messiah, Son of God, to be prayed to. The Cross is a grim reminder for Christians that Jesus had to pay the ultimate price for their sins and the sins of the entire world. The Crucifix is also a victory symbol for Christians. It denotes the victory of the Truth over the untruth, Life over Death and Christ over Satan. Jesus Christ is the only incarnation of God in the flesh. (The world claims several thousands such incarnations. But all of them are non-existent or are mere mortals like Buddha). The statue of Jesus is like the **Arc of the Covenant** of the Old Testament. The Israelites did not worship the Ark, but the spirit of the true God that dwelt in the Ark. When a person worships a statue of Jesus, he is not worshipping the statue; he/she is worshipping the "Spirit of Christ" God Incarnate that dwells in the statue.

What about idolaters who worship idols? Do they worship the spirit of God in their idols as they claim? No. Because the idol they are worshipping is the image of a non-existent mythological god or of a guru or sage living or dead. These do not represent the true god under any circumstances. These are gods in the imagination of their followers. Hence the worship of these images is idolatry. When people worship an idol/statue they are actually worshipping the spirit behind the statue. If it is not Christ, then it has to be Satan and his demons. The Bible is replete with such examples. Indeed where there is no Christ, there is Satan and his demons. The Bible defines Hell as the place where there is no God. But in hell there is Satan.

However Catholics are idolaters if they bow down to, or worship or pray to Catholic Saints and the Virgin Mary. The statues of saints and other entities in the Catholic world are carryovers of the pagan gods worshipped by the inhabitants of Europe and Asia Minor before the spread of the Roman Catholicism, and are thus idolatrous in the essential sense of the word.

Idolatry can take many shapes. It's not only bowing to a representation of a deity, it's giving up your faith to anything else than God. One can also worship a car, a job, a woman, husband, wife etc. It doesn't have to be a deity per se. You commit this sin if you ever come to consider something in your life more important than the true God.

The biggest problem with Idol worship is that it does not come alone. It comes in the satanic bundle with other strings attached. Like the abominations of the Ancients, even today scores of children are sacrificed to these idol gods. The custom is very much prevalent in India and China. In India for instance devout religious idolaters will kidnap other people's children and sacrifice them to their gods and goddesses (especially the bloodthirsty goddesses Durga and Kali) asking for blessings. The sinful practice of abortion termed aptly 'the silent holocaust' is widely prevalent in idolatrous countries. Idol worship has not really gone into decline, but rather it been taken to a new level by Man's devotion to the great gods – idols, money, status, fame, vehicles, television, sports, fashions, free sex and material gain. How many revere actors, sportspersons and singers as their gods? The term 'pop idol' is more than just a figure of speech. Most of them are worshipped as Gods.

God demands our supreme devotion! We are to love god "*with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our strength*". (Deuteronomy 6:5). The Lord Jesus said that He wants us to love Him even more than we love our own Father and our own Mother (Matthew 10:37). The same goes for husband, wife, boyfriend and girlfriend too. In Exodus 20:3 we read the first of the 10 Commandments: "**Thou shall have no other gods before me.**" There is no other God because He is the only true God, **but** it is possible for us to make gods and give them the devotion that we should give to the true God. In this first commandment God was saying, "I COME FIRST! BE SURE TO GIVE ME FIRST PLACE IN YOUR LIFE!" Anything that we let have first places in our lives other than God is an idol. Anything that occupies the place in our hearts that is due to God is an idol.

Idolatry and Perception

The root cause of Idolatry is perception. Most people filter all that they read, hear, and see through the occluded lens of their religion, politics, country, occupation, gender, or race. And here lies the root cause of all problems. Man with his limited brainpower does not have the intellectual capability to grasp the concept of the infinite god. So what does he do? He brings down god from his high pedestal to his own level. He makes idols of God.

There are others who affirm that God is knowable only through Idols. If one wants to grasp the concept of God, then Idols are a must. But the Bible declares that the true God is knowable, but not through Idols. The true God abhors Idols. In the Judeo-Christian religions, Idol worship represents "Acid Satanism" (meaning the highest form of Satanism) a term given to Idol worship fourteen centuries back by the Byzantine Christians. God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, the Canaanites, the Egyptians and even his own people the Jews because of the sin of Idolatry.

To see how different perception is from the Truth we just have to analyze the Holy Bible. By cleverly selecting verses from the Bible and taking them out of context, it is possible to project the Bible as preaching "racism", "pornography", "violence", "immorality", "slavery" etc, etc. A person reading such text will really be convinced that the Bible is such a literature. But there is only one reality, one truth. Either the Bible is a Holy Book or Racist Book; either it scripture or it is a pornographic novel; either it is the only Holy Book or it is a charade. On the other hand it is possible to take out selected verses from a book of fiction like the Bhagwad Gita and portray the Gita as a genuine holy book. That is the perception that people will get after reading these selected verses. But try to understand the background history of the Gita and immediately you will realize that it is nothing more than a collection of a few chapters from a famous epic, a fictitious story that never occurred. (The Bhagwad Gita is made up of 18 chapters of the epic Mahabharata. An epic is a mythological story that never occurred). This is the truth about perception.

Let us take another example. Take the story of "The Emperor's new clothes" by Grimm Brothers. In the story, the emperor in reality was wearing his underwear, but his courtiers were continually praising him for the choice, quality and richness of his clothes. So were his ministers and servants. All this time the emperor was under the perception that he was wearing the best of clothes. But it took a child to expose his nakedness. That was the ultimate reality, the definitive truth.

Today in India there are scores of people enslaved to idols. India is a nation asleep in religious bondage continually in rebellion against the living God due to its worship of idols. Idolatry still has a powerful hold on the minds of Indians. Almost every village or community has a favorite idol or deity - there are 330 million idol gods in the Hindu pantheon alone. In addition,

various animistic cults, which involve the worship of powerful spirits, are openly practiced. In many areas the village temple still is the center of informal education, tourism and civic pride. Religion is big business, and temples take in vast sums of money annually. Millions of priests and amateur practitioners of the occult arts also are profiteering from the continuation and expansion of traditional religions. Like the silversmiths in Ephesus, they aren't taking the influx of Christian missionaries to spread the light of the true god lightly in their regions. For centuries they have kept the village people under their foot by feeding them on mythological make-believe. They have fooled the people into believing that they are serving God through these idols when in reality they have been serving demon spirits.

Few Indians if any when they see the poverty, suffering and violence in Asia, take time to stop and ask why the East is bound into an endless cycle of suffering while Western nations are so blessed. Religious Indians are quick to point out that India is poor because their karma is bad. They say that with a few reincarnations their fate will improve. This is an outright lie. These people have been like that for the last 6000 years. **How many reincarnations does it need for the East to increase its karma?** Secular humanists are quick to reel out many historic and pseudo-scientific reasons for the disparity, because they are unwilling to face the truth. The real reason is simple: The Judeo-Christian heritage of Europe has brought the favor of God, while false religions of Eastern Asia have brought the curse of Babylon. Reincarnation, moksha and karma are lies of Satan to deceive many. The Bible teaches there are only two religions in this world. There is the worship of the one true God, and there is a false system of demonic alternative invented in ancient Iran. From there, Persian armies and priests spread their faith to India where it took root. Hindu missionaries in turn spread it throughout the rest of Asia. The conversion of India to the Persian faith happened so long ago that today most Indians claim that the Persian faith is the religion of their forefathers. It is perception that has blinded the eyes of the people to foolishly believe in the religion of their forefathers rather than in the one true God.

In life whichever way one takes, there can be many levels of perception, but the Truth will always be one. Every religion today claims to be the one true religion and the only way to God. There are some that claim all religions lead to the same God. These are the levels of perceptions we see today. However, eventually only one can be the Ultimate Truth.

Sin and Idolatry

That brings us to a very important topic. It is sin. Many people including some Christian denominations say that there is no such thing as sin. But the Bible talks at length on Sin. According to the Bible, Sin is disobedience of the word of God. *Sin is the transgression of the law of God* (1 John 3:4). Sin is what separates man from God. Sin is a term used to describe an act that violates a moral code of conduct or the state of having committed such a violation. In the Judeo-Christian religions, the code of conduct is determined by God. Colloquially, any thought, word, or act considered immoral, shameful, harmful, or alienative might be termed "sinful".

To sin in both Hebrew and Greek means to miss the mark. The mark is the standard of God. So it also implies to falling short of the standards of God. And what is it that makes sin, sin in the first place? Sin is not sin if it just hurts fellow humans. It is sin only if it offends God. In general terms, sin is sin only if it is an offence against God. In the Judeo-Christian religion, there are 2 types of sins. There are sins committed directly against God and sins committed against humans. All sins committed against humans are also sins committed against God. The other type of sins, is sin directly committed against God like Idolatry, blasphemy, etc. **The Bible characterizes Idolatry as the greatest of all sins and the only unforgivable sin.** (Sexual sins are next in line and murder including abortion is the third greatest of all sins).

Idolatry is the **greatest sin** that a human being can commit because it equates the Creator with the creation and diverts worship from the Creator to the creation. Idol worship is gross injustice, the violation of the first commandment in all the scriptures of God, and is an unforgivable sin. Being the only unforgivable sin, idol worship is the most disastrous path any human being may take. **With the sin of idol worship the soul is cut off completely from the living God, leaving it with no connection to the saving grace of God.**

Since idol worship is the greatest of all sins, god commands in his first two commandments not to make graven idols and worship them as God or means to reach God.

The first two commandments enumerate to the following,

- 1. I am the Lord thy God** , who have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. **Thou shalt not have any other gods besides me.** (Exodus 20:2-3)
- 2. Thou shalt not make for thyself any graven image** (carved idol) 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; thou shalt not bow down to them or serve them; for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God,

punishing the iniquities of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those that hate me; but showing mercy to thousands of generations of those that love me, and keep my commandments. (Exodus 20:4-6)

Simply put the first commandment means that you shall have no other gods before the living god. Truly speaking there is not other god who can challenge the living god. But it is possible for man to make an imaginary god and worship it. These gods could be mythological gods, money, possessions, sex, lust, greed, movies, TV, etc. What the first commandment means is simply that you shall have the living God first in your life. Jesus expresses this in Matthew 6:33 as "*Seek ye first the kingdom of Heaven and the rest shall be added unto you*". Seek the true God first in your life, give him the first place in your life and the rest of your life will be taken care of by him. The second commandment means that you shall not worship the true god in the form of idols, mythological carvings, images, animals, humans, prophets, sages, guru's, etc.

Notice the veiled threat that God gives for the sin of Idolatry in the second commandment. In no other commandment or teaching throughout the Bible is such a threat given by God or any of the prophets for any other sin other than idolatry. Indeed Idolatry is the most horrendous crime that can ever be committed.

The Apostle Paul said, "*Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, **nor idolaters**, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God*" (1 Cor. 6:9–10).

Today, some of these very acts are touted as forms of acceptable conduct, all under the guise of communal harmony, religious plurality and diversity. There will be much for which some people will have to answer to God when they stand in front of him during the last judgment.

If sin is such an unforgivable offence, then why do people still sin? The answer is, the devil isn't stupid, he makes sin look desirable. He will sugar coat the bitter pill of sin and give it to you. The sugar coating is the attractiveness or the temporary pleasure derived as a result of sinning. But the result of every sin is some kind of nasty consequence. Sometimes its immediate, other times it happens so far away that when the consequence happens, people say "why did this happen to me?" They don't realize its a result of an old sin they committed. It is not God punishing people, its a law of life. We do not see gravity, but we quickly see the results when we violate it. In the same manner, we cannot see the Law of God; it is not visible to us. But, we can quickly see the consequences of breaking it. Thousands wonder why things always turn out bad for them; they never seem to get the breaks. The reason is clear. They are breaking the invisible, spiritual law God has set in motion. This spiritual law exacts a penalty, and this penalty is inexorable

both in this life on earth and on the Day of Judgment. One is judged not only by what one does, but by what one thinks. Jesus said, *"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery. But I say to you, everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart."* (Matt. 5:27–28).

(Hindus believe in the law of Karma. That what you are in this life is because of your deeds in your previous life. The law of Karma is a lie. Man lives only once and after that the judgment. The law of Karma is an untruth spread by the evil one so that man continually keeps on sinning in his life and misses the bus to heaven. The law of Karma effectively states, don't repent of your sins in this life, keep sinning in this life, there is always a next life where you can repent of your sins).

According to worldly standards, one mans sin is another mans pleasure & visa versa. It all depends on how that person defines sin - According to his own standards, or according to God's standards. Sin according to man is relative. But according to God it is absolute. For instance Adultery, fornication, consenting sex and practicing yoga are not considered sins by most Americans, but idolatry is. On the other hand all these are considered sins by God. Indians don't consider idolatry and sexual sins as sins. It is part of life for them. But to God all these are sins of the worst type.

Another great aspect is how our perception changes with our circumstances. I had a Hindu friend who married a Christian girl. This girl came from a very religious family and would never prostrate before her husband idol gods in those days. She gave me the explanation that her God was different from the mythological gods that her husband worshipped. But five years after marriage when I visited my friend's house, the girl was still a Christian (or at least she called herself a Christian) but she was worshipping her husband's gods also. When I casually inquired she gave me the explanation that all religions were the same and paths to the same one God.

This is the truth about perception. Human perception changes with the times and the situations, but the truth in god's eyes remains the same forever and ever. In everyday life we encounter several people. Some of these have bath everyday; some have once in 2-3 days, some once a week and others once a month. Yet all of them will claim to be clean. It may happen that the one who has bath once in a month is the most vociferous about how clean he is. So it is with religions. Everyone claims to follow the ONLY true path. Perception does play a large part in booking permanent places in hell for most people.

Throughout history, people have their own definition of what is acceptable and what is not. Some take sin as against the 10 Commandments that God gave Moses to the children of Israel on Mount Sinai. For example, Thou shall not kill. But a lot of people missed the standards of God. When Jesus came, He explained that even if you were to hate someone, you have committed murder. The standards are now exposed to be so high that ALL men have fallen short of the glory of God and none can save themselves except by accepting THE Savior, Jesus Christ.

Forms of Idolatry

Idolatry is to conceive or have something else in which to place our trust instead of, or besides, the one true God who has revealed Himself in His Word. Idolatry is a sin many people have grown callous to in modern society. Idolatry means image-worship or divine honor paid to any created object. The most common form of Idolatry is worship of carved stone images as gods and goddesses. These stones are given different names by the devotees of these stones. Sometimes even the penises of Gods are worshipped by the devotees; the most famous case being the penis of the Hindu God Shiva. It is called as lingam in Hinduism and it is believed that worshipping the penis gives Hindus "Kundalini energy" or sexual energy. Such is the impact of idolatry today that around 82% of the known world indulges in this evil either directly or indirectly. The Bible describes worship of graven images and idols by the following phrases "Mother of All Sins", "Cause of all evil", "Beginning of the end", etc. Today we have half male-half female forms of God, half man-half beast, fully beast, etc when the Bible clearly accentuates that God is spirit and hence cannot be described by the terms male or female.

Many times people make a god out of things and possessions. This is another form of idolatry. The Bible says that a covetous man is an Idolater (Ephesians 5:5). Covetousness is "the desire to have more (and more and more)." This is especially true in our country where everyone is in the hot pursuit to accumulate as much wealth as possible by hook or by crook.

Yet another form of Idolatry is the worship of a guru or sadhu or sage as a means to reach God. The guru is supposed to be the medium between man and God and is supposed to hold spiritual powers. Even after his death, his tomb is worshipped by those who have considered him as his guru. The practice has reached such bad proportion, that devotee's give more reverence to the guru than one would give god. This has resulted in the devotees being financially and sexually exploited by the Guru's to fulfill their earthy desires. Such practices exist mainly in mythology-powered religions of oriental countries like India, China, and Thailand.

According to the Bible, Jesus is the only medium or guru to reach God. There is no need of any other earthly guru. This was made possible by the death of Jesus on the Cross. The Gospel of Matthew narrates that when Jesus laid down his life for the sins of the world, the Veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.

*But Jesus cried out again in a loud voice, and gave up his spirit. And behold, **the veil of the sanctuary was torn in two from top to bottom.** (Matthew 27:30)*

What is the significance of this event?

To understand this we should go back to Jewish times. In those days the Jewish Rabbi's used to sacrifice to God on behalf of the common man. Every lay Jew was considered to be a sinner as per the law given by Moses and prohibited entry inside the temple of God. Only the Jewish Rabbi's were considered holy enough to sacrifice to God. But the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross of Calvary cleansed man of all sin. From that point onwards Man could approach God directly as his child through Jesus Christ. Jesus was to be the only interceder between man and God. But the Devil introduced many more false mediums to lead the children of God away from the loving God.

Fetishism or the worship of trees, rivers, hills, stones etc is another form of Idolatry. Yet another form is nature worship, the worship of the sun, moon, and stars, as the supposed powers of the universe. Animism or the worship of deceased ancestors is one of the oldest forms of idolatry. A form of idolatry that is slowly gaining worldwide acceptance is Hero worship, the worship of heroes like superman, Spiderman and Harry Potter.

The only Idols permissible are that of Jesus Christ and the Cross. Why? Jesus is the only incarnation of God in human form. Every mythological religion in the past right from Aztec to Persian, Greek to Hinduism has claimed their own incarnations of Gods. But these are all imaginary gods. They never existed in real life. As the civilization came into being the gods came to life, as the civilization died down the gods bit the dust and disappeared. In addition these gods did not come down on earth to save sinners like Jesus did, they came to destroy sinners, commit adultery and do all other sorts of sexual immorality. Jesus Christ is the only true incarnation of God and the only God. The rest are all figments of imaginations.

The Cross is the victory symbol for all Christians. It symbolizes Christ's victory over Satan and his demons. In Christianity, the cross virtually symbolizes Christ. The **cross** is only the second symbol in the world after the ***name of Jesus*** that has Satan and his demons scurrying for cover and as such it is used as a powerful weapon during Exorcism by many Christian churches.

Why is Idolatry bad?

One of the questions asked by many Idolaters is "Why is Idol worship bad? Why does your God get angry about Idol worship? Why is your God so eager about whom we worship?"

So why is Idolatry bad? Why is it a sin? Many people especially those committed to Idolatry cannot grasp this concept. They cannot find idolatry bad for the same reason a sinner cannot see an evil deed he has committed as a sin or a thief cannot find a policeman. A pig considers its filthy sty the cleanest place in the world. So it is with Idolaters who consider idolatry as the highest form of divine worship. Most Idolaters cannot comprehend how grievous a sin is Idolatry. One cannot explain the virtues of cleanliness to a pig frolicking in the mud. So also it is with explaining the sinfulness of idolatry to those indulging in it. It is much easier to find water in a desert than to explain the estrangement from god caused by idolatry. If you try to explain, most likely you will get lynched or hacked to death like it is happening to hundreds of missionaries who are trying to get Indians out of the pitch-black darkness that they have been living in for generations.

In this topic, I will try to elucidate why idolatry is a sin.

Let me illustrate it with an example. Say you are a loving father and your child is standing a little in front of you at a party. Now say one of the distinguished guests comes near him/her and asks, "Who is your Father Child"? Your Heart swells with pride thinking that the child will immediately point to you. But your child does not do that. It points out to your biggest enemy and says that he is his/her father. What will be your reaction? Will you brush it aside saying it is a trivial matter or will you be furious?

THINK IT OVER.

This is the same reaction that our Father in heaven will be having when one of his children whom he loves very much (see Matthew 3:26) denies him and considers Satan as his/her father. (According to the Bible, we can either be the children of God doing his will or the children of Satan carrying out his orders).

The gravity of a sin may be considered on the part of the sin itself, and thus idolatry is the most grievous sin. For just as the most heinous crime in an earthly kingdom would be for a man to give royal honor to another than the true king, so in sins that are committed against God, for a man to give God's honor to a creature, since, so far as he is concerned, he sets up another God in the world, and lessens the divine sovereignty.

The irony of the times is that God made man in His own image, but man rejected the true god and made hand carved gods to worship. This grieved God's heart and provoked Him. God does care if we sully His Name or take the glory meant for him alone. He will forgive until a certain limit only. His

holiness demands judgment (Romans 1:18-32) but his love drives him to patience so more sinners can be saved (2 Peter 3:9). Even in his infinite forgiveness God requires respect for His character. He doesn't want His Name defamed. Let me explain with the help of an example. Say you are the nicest person in the world. But there are some hoodlums using your name and going around committing all sorts of sins. The media is reporting it in your name. How long will you keep quiet? Can you allow this blemish to your name? Take the other way round. There are some other people who always take the glory you deserve. Every time you do something good the media reports it in their name and they take the glory. How long will you be able to bear this injustice? So it is my friend with God. God will forgive your idolatry uptill a certain extent, then suddenly he will decide enough is enough and act. The net result will be an incident in your life like the great flood of Noah's times, or another Sodom and Gomorrah or wanderings in the Sinai.

Man was created by God to give glory to the creator by his deeds but man rejected the true god and replaced him by idols. And what idols? Gods committing all sorts of sins and perversions! And to give the name God to such creatures or works of stone is disgracing to God and his glory.

In the past nations of the earth in their ignorance worshiped gods that cannot see or hear or speak. Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Greece, Rome all these countries were once filled with idol worship. The names of those native gods are mentioned in the ancient writings of these civilizations. But in course of time, these nations that earnestly worshiped and served these gods became conscious of the foolishness of serving them and threw them away as dirt. At one time Greece and Athens were centers of idol worship and haven for gods of all kind. Even though Greece was a nation with great culture and philosophy it was worshiping false gods. Many people like Socrates knew this. They talked against this and made fun of those gods. The Apostle Paul was the first Christian missionary to Athens. While he was in that temple city he saw the place was filled with idols and spoke to the people about the true God and called on them to follow the living God. Many people heeded his call and believed in the true God. Due to Paul's missionary zeal lot of people came to know whom to worship. There are many people in the world who don't know what they worship. Jesus met a woman who didn't know what she worshiped. She was not a Jew. She told Jesus that her ancestors used to worship on a local mountain. Jesus told her that her people, the Samaritans don't know what they worshiped. But the Jews knew what they worshiped. The woman thought she and her fathers were worshiping something important. But she was wrong. Knowing what one worships is important. The Holy Bible tells very clearly what to worship, how to worship and where to worship. Unfortunately many Indians worship the gods of their ancestors without really understanding what they worship. As a result millions of Stone Age gods which were worshipped by their ancestors eons ago are still being worshipped by them in this electronic age.

Idolaters in India claim that idol worship is a superior form of divine worship. They claim that, *"Sometimes as recorded by human experience,*

the idols do respond and converse with man. If there is enough devotion in the heart of a devotee God responds to him with a direct response. The lives of Mirabai, Sant Tukaram, Shri Ramakrishna Paramhansa and Shri Yogananda are a few instances to prove the point. They proved beyond doubt that idol worship has its own brighter side and through simple faith and intense devotion one can realize God through it. "

Let me assure you it is not the God of the Bible who responded on these occasions. It is the same demons that are currently eating the food offered to idols.

There are some others who claim that they do not worship some other God. They worship the same God as the creator of the Universe through different forms. These forms may include idols, trees, animals, plants, ancestors, stones, rivers, nature, mythological characters, etc. Through these creatures they claim to worship the real living God.

But that is not true. When the Ten Commandments were given, there were people in Egypt doing and claiming the same thing. But God did not heed their excuses. On the Contrary he gave the second commandment that plainly stated that Man should not worship the real living God in the form of idols, animals, humans or any other form on earth. He promised them dire consequences if they did. (Read Exodus 20:4-6)

Let us come back to the main question. Why is Idolatry bad? Why is it a sin? It is because the full power of Satanism is manifested in Idols. Idol worship has long been called "**Acid Satanism**" meaning the highest form of Satanism. The Bible tells us how Satan rebelled against God and was booted out from heaven along with the angels (now demons) who rebelled against God. (The fall of Satan is described in Isaiah 14:12-14 and Ezekiel 28:12-18). As described in the book of Isaiah, Satan's demons took the form of man and came on earth. They reproduced and produced giant offspring's which had superhuman powers. In due course these came to be worshipped as Gods. In addition Satan who could not become God in heaven came down on earth and manifested himself as mythological gods and goddesses. Very few people will worship Satan in his true image. Hence Satan had to disguise himself as idols of Gods and Goddesses to get the worship from humans due only to God. His only aim was to steal worship from God. And has he succeeded?

Satan has succeeded in spreading three main lies. The first is **Man is God**. The second is **All religions or religious paths lead to the same God**. And the third, **Idol worship and Yoga are the highest paths to reach God**.

Is Man God? Jesus in the Bible calls Satan, Father of lies (John 8:44). Where is the justification for such a statement? Satan promised Eve that if she ate the forbidden fruit, then she would be like God (Genesis 3:5). And Adam and Eve ate the fruit. But did they become like God? No! Satan is indeed the father of lies. Lies came to this world through Satan. The belief

that Man is God comes from Satan. Every religion which preaches the divinity of mankind also comes from Satan.

Do all religions lead to the same God? All religions agree that God is the Truth. If God is the Truth, then dogmas leading to this truth should not contradict one another. But what we find is that all the fundamental dogmas of the various religions are aligned against one another. Is Reincarnation (Hinduism) true or Resurrection (Christianity) true? Is Man God (Hinduism) or Man is not God (Christianity)? Did God become incarnate many times (Hinduism) or God became incarnate only once (Christianity)? Did God become incarnate to kill sinners (Hinduism) or to save sinners (Christianity)? Did God become incarnate to indulge in sexual immorality (Hinduism – Krishna) or to die for Sinners (Christianity)? Is Idolatry a sin (Christianity) or the highest path to God (Hinduism)? Are we saved by Grace (Christianity) or by Karma (Hinduism)? Is God hatred (Islam) or is he love (Christianity)? Is God a Jihadi (Islam) or is he a Savior (Christianity)? Is God in hell kindling the hells fires (Islam) or Is he in heaven (Christianity)? Does God take pleasure in torturing man (Islam) or he is saddened (Christianity)?

When asked such questions, people who advocate religious pluralism have no answer. It is obvious religious pluralism is meant for donkeys and not for human beings created in God's image.

Is Idol worship and Yoga the highest paths to reach God? Idol worship is the only sin committed against God directly. All other sins are committed against God's creation and hence indirectly against God. Is it any surprise that Satan is inciting idolaters to murder missionaries and clergyman preaching against the slavery of idolatry?

Is yoga the door to heaven as Yogis claim? If it is so, they why are the powers acquired by a Yogi the same as those acquired by doing black magic and witchcraft? Why the higher consciousness felt by yogic mediation is the same felt during hallucinations by taking drugs? Why the Gods and heavenly beings encountered during yogic trances are the same evil spirits encountered by the Exorcist during Exorcism (process of driving out demons in a persons)?

Such is the affinity of Satan to Idol worship that he has managed to fool some of the very elect of God into believing that what they are doing is not Idol worship, but Godly praise. The Catholic Church routinely worships Mary and the Catholic Saints. Then there is the "Hail Mary" a prayer contrived by Satan to push Jesus to a corner and make the Catholics worship Mary. Early Catholics were tortured and put to death for refusing to say "Hail Caesar", today's Catholics regularly say "Hail Mary". Somehow Satan has turned a full circle and managed to sow his seeds in some of the Christian churches. This problem is seen in Islam too. Dargah worship has become the norm in Islam. And as usual Muslims will deny worshipping Idols.

Why does God allow Idol worship?

I will answer this question straight from the scriptures. The scriptures states,

"But you are a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abundant in loving kindness, and didn't forsake them. Yes, when they had made them a molten calf, and said, This is your God who brought you up out of Egypt, and had committed awful blasphemies; yet you in your manifold mercies didn't forsake them in the wilderness: the pillar of cloud didn't depart from over them by day, to lead them in the way; neither the pillar of fire by night, to show them light, and the way in which they should go." (Nehemiah 9:17-19)

The above passage clearly explains why God does not punish immediately the Idol worshipers. It is why Idolaters are alive today. The living God is a loving and forgiving God, slow to anger. Israel broke the covenant of God umpteen times and every time God the loving father forgave Israel their wrong doings. Every time Israel moved away from the living God, they were left vulnerable to their enemies attack and suffered heavy loses. But each time they cried to God for help and forgiveness, God forgave them and did not forsake them. The love of God for sinners is best expressed by the parable of the prodigal son told by Jesus and narrated in the Gospel of Luke Chapter 15. Idolaters too are in the same category. They too are the children of the same God, but worshipping another God. God is constantly forgiving them and waiting for them to leave their false gods behind and call on him.

One of the most important characteristics of the true god is he does not force his will on anyone. He waits for them to give an invitation to him. Only if invited will he come into your heart and into your life. He is the god who believes in free will. One of the major differences between the Islamic God and the Christian God concerns free will. Allah says in the Islamic scriptures, "If a Muslim leaves his religion, then kill him". But the Christian god is all about free will. There are scores of passages in the Bible which exemplify the free will conduct of God. I will mention only a few of them here.

Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. (Rev 3:20)

Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for your selves. For my yoke is easy, and my burden light." (Matthew 11:28-30)

The parable of the prodigal son is the greatest example of the free will concept of God. In the parable, the Father represents God and the son, human beings. When the son wants to leave, the father does not stop him and when he comes back broken and poor, he accepts him without question.

Power of Satan

Satan is cunning. Satan is powerful. He won't allow you to leave your mythological idols and your possessions. He will try every trick in his bag to dissuade you from worship of the true god. Satan does not want your riches, your wealth, your power, and your fame. He wants your soul. He comes as a thief to steal your soul (John 10:10). And he won't stop until he has got it.

Satan is least interested in you if you worship a mythological god thinking it to be the true god. There are hundreds of Hindu sadhu's and Muslim fakir's who come down from the Himalayas and roam the streets of Srinagar seeking alms. Many times I ask them of their experiences. None of them have ever recited to me an experience wherein some evil power stopped them or interfered with their praying or preaching. On the other hand Satan and his demons are routinely tormenting Christian preachers and evangelists. Why this difference? We find light in the second commandment. Those who worship a god other than the true God Yahweh and the manifestation of Yahweh in flesh, Jesus of Nazareth do not worship the real god. So naturally Satan does not bother them.

Indeed, so powerful is Satanism in Idolatry that all Idol worshipping Pantheistic religions including Hinduism deny the concept of Sin, the main reason why God became incarnate and came down on earth.

To aid to the confusion Satan has created several imaginary Gods to induce doubts in the minds of the believers. The number of pagan deities (mostly virgin-born and done to death in some way or other in their efforts to save mankind) is so great as to be difficult to keep account of. The god *Krishna* in India, the god *Indra* in Nepal and Tibet spilt their blood for the salvation of men; the Chinese *Tien* the Holy One - 'one with God and existing with him from all eternity' - died to save the world; The Egyptian *Osiris* was called Savior, so was *Horus*; so was the Persian *Mithra*; so was the Greek *Hercules* who overcame Death though his body was consumed in the burning garment of mortality. So also was the Phrygian *Attis* called Savior, and the Syrian *Tammuz* or *Adonis* likewise - both of whom were nailed or tied to a tree, and afterwards rose again from their biers or coffins. *Prometheus*, the earliest benefactor of the human race, was *nailed by the hands and the feet, and with arms extended*, to the rocks of Mount Caucasus. *Bacchus* or *Dionysus*, born of the virgin Semele to be the Liberator of mankind (Dionysus Eleutherios as he was called) was torn to pieces, not unlike Osiris.

As seen, Satan has created many mythological gods to create confusion in the minds of believers about Jesus Christ, the only beacon of hope for this sinful world. Satan's only aim is that no one should take the path of eternal life available only through the Savior Jesus Christ.

The Origin of Idol Worship

Idolatry is image-worship or divine honor paid to any created object. Paul describes the origin of idolatry in Rom 1:21 whereby men forsook God, and sank into ignorance and moral corruption (Rom 1:28). Considered in itself, idolatry is the greatest of mortal sins. For it is, by definition, an inroad on God's sovereignty over the world, an attempt on His Divine majesty, a rebellious setting up of a creature on the throne that belongs to Him alone.

Idolatry in its grosser forms is so far removed from the Christianized mind that it is no easy matter to account for its origin. Its persistence after gaining a first footing, and its branching out in countless varieties, are sufficiently explained by the moral necessity imposed on the younger generation to walk in the path of their elders with only insignificant deviations to the right or to the left. The question as to the first origin of idolatry is thus answered by the Bible:

The cause of idolatry is twofold: dispositive on the part of man; consummative on the part of the demons.

Men were led to idolatry first by disordered affections, inasmuch as they bestowed divine honors upon someone whom they loved or venerated beyond measure. This cause is indicated in Wisdom 14:15 and Wisdom 14:21,

"For a father being afflicted by bitter grief, made to himself the image of his son who was quickly taken away; and him who then had died as a man, he began now to worship as a god . . . " (Wisdom 14:15)

"Men serving either their affection or their king, gave the incommunicable name to stones and wood". (Wisdom 14:21)

By their natural love for artistic representations: uncultured men, seeing statues cunningly reproducing the figure of man, worshipped them as gods. Hence we read in Wisdom 13:11,

'An artist, a carpenter has cut down a tree proper for his use in the wood and by the skill of his art fashioneth it and maketh it like the image of a man and then maketh prayers to it, inquiring concerning his substance and his children or his marriage'. (Wisdom 13:11)

By their ignorance of the true God: man, not considering the excellence of God, attributed divine worship to certain creatures excelling in beauty or virtue: Wisdom 13:1-2,

' neither by attending to the works have [men] acknowledged who was the workman, but have imagined either the fire, or the wind, or the swift

air, or the circle of the stars, or the great water, or the sun and moon, to be the gods that rule the world'. (Wisdom 13:1-2)

The consummative cause of idolatry was the influence of the demons who offered themselves to the worship of erring men, giving answers from idols or doing things which to men seemed marvelous, hence the Psalmist says,

'All the gods of the gentiles are devils'" (Psalm 95:5)

The book of wisdom gives a detailed history of the dispositive origin of idolatry in the world. The books of Isaiah and Ezekiel give the history of the Consummative part of idolatry. According to the Bible, Satan led a revolt against God and was kicked out from heaven. Satan who could not become God in heaven came down on earth (along with the rebellious angels, now demons) to take revenge against God. Satan's demons took the form of man, seduced earthy woman and produced giant offspring's which had superhuman powers. In due course these came to be worshipped as Gods. In addition Satan manifested himself as Idols, fetishes and demi-Gods which human beings started worshipping. His only intension was to steal the honor and worship that was due to God alone and take it for himself. And that is how Idolatry started.

The spread of Idolatry in Asia

Hindus say that India is a Hindu land and the birthplace of Hinduism. This is far from true. Hindus are as much alien to India as are Muslims and Christians. The birthplace of idol worship is not India but Iran. The false system of demonic worship or idolatry was invented in Persia or modern Iran. Idol worship took root here somewhere around 5000 BC and it spread across the known world.

Persian armies and priests spread their faith to India, Babylon (Iraq), the Middle East, west Asia, Greece and the Caucasian countries. In due course each developed its own version of idolatry with different gods and goddesses. But the central point of Idol worship remained the same.

In 2700 BC, Caucasian nomads, the Aryans invaded India and settled in northern and central parts of India imposing their own religions on the defeated Indians. Hinduism has evolved from this seed. In later years, Hindu missionaries in turn spread their faith throughout the rest of the eastern Asian countries of Burma, Thailand, Laos, Malaysia and Indonesia. During the last few hundred years many of these countries came under the influence of Islamic or Christian missionaries and converted to either Islam or Christianity. However traces of Hinduism still survive in these countries till date.

In around 2500 BC, Gautama Buddha founded his religion which spread to large parts of Asia after his death. At one time India was around one third Buddhist and Buddhism in India was growing at the cost of Hinduism. This was until Hindu kings took the sword to drive Buddhism out of the country and reconvert Buddhists back to Hinduism. Buddhism was hounded out of the country of its birth, but it found refuge in foreign countries like Ceylon, Thailand and Malaysia. Though Buddha never asked his followers to worship him, Buddhists regularly worship images of Buddha and hence should be considered idolaters.

The Ways of Idol Worship

Experts studying Idolatrous ways describe two ways of Idol Worship. These two ways are

1. The People concerned claim to **worship another false God** in the Idol.
2. The People concerned claim to **worship the image of the true one God** in the Idol.

The Bible lists out both these examples. Both of them are derogatory to the true God. In spite of the apparent contradiction in both of these ways of idol worship, a few religions like Hinduism & Taoism have a foot in both of these ways. These religions believe that whichever way you want to believe, is true. If there is any contradiction then it is just an illusion (maya).

Both of the ways listed above have some common traits – They have a god for everything. There is a God for health, a god for wealth, a god for war, a god for hell, a god for learning, a god for wisdom, a god for knowledge, and even a god for sex. A secondary trait is the gods are blood thirsty leeches. If you do not satisfy them they will act with a vengeance against you. For example, if you are going to start a new venture and you do not sacrifice offerings to the god of new ventures then be sure he is going to go for your throat. (Note how different this is from the true God who believes in free will). Similarly these gods can turn against you without any reason. Consequently all good or bad that happens to the followers of these religions is interpreted as either blessings or curses of their Almighty.

Worshipping God in Idols

This is by far the most common form of Idolatry. Today those worshipping Idols insist that they are not worshipping Idols, but rather the true God in the image of the Idol. The claim to be worshipping the idea behind the idol and not the idol itself. Tut tut tut...Does not the second command prohibit humans from worshipping the true god in any image or idol or creature on earth or in heaven?

Let us go back to the incident of the golden calf in the Bible. The Bible says,

"The people saw that Moses delayed in coming down from the mountain. They gathered around Aaron, and said to him, 'Make us a shrine which will go before us. We have no idea what became of Moses, the man who brought us out of Egypt...' The people took off their earrings and brought them to Aaron, who cast them into a molten calf. Some of the people began to say, 'This is your god, O Israel, who brought you out of Egypt.'" (Exodus 32:1-4)

Here we are bothered by one basic question: If the Jews had just witnessed God's awesome power in the Ten Plagues, the splitting of the Red Sea, and the revelation at Mount Sinai, how could these same people turn around and worship a Golden Calf? Why did Aaron make the golden calf when he was chosen as god's spokesperson?

The answer is that the Jews never built the calf as a separate God (as Exodus 34:4 clearly suggests). They build it with the intention of worshipping the true God in its image. They were supposedly worshipping the God of Israel who brought them out of Egypt in the guise of the Calf. The Jews reasoned: If Moses isn't coming back, we must craft ourselves a replacement. And so the Golden Calf was born. Not as an idol; not as a rebellion against God. But as a figurehead, a mere shrine to replace the God of Israel whom no one had seen except Moses.

The golden calf incident must be seen in the light of this observation. The Israelites were scared to death of the desert. Only Moses knew desert ways, and he had gone away for much longer than they had expected; maybe he was gone for good. Furthermore, this God who had adopted them had never provided for them at the level to which they had become accustomed. He would not allow them to make any idol to represent him. He would not talk with them directly like he did to Moses. So, in desperation, they forced Aaron, the only other person who might be able to lead them through the desert, to solicit divine help. They asked Aaron to make for them a divine Calf, the God of Egypt. Some of the Israelites took it for another God; Most took it for the god of Israel. The people wanted help; they did not much care who provided it, as long as they were taken care of. Aaron vainly tried (and thought he had succeeded) to curb the people's rebellion by restoring their commitment to the God of Abraham. Having made the golden calf, he organized a celebration to honor the God he meant it to represent--Yahweh.

But God was not fooled. He does not want people to worship Hand made objects crafted in the shape of Animals or Humans in his name. This is what the second commandment is all about. The Jews had to pay for this sin of theirs with their life. God made the Israelites wander in the wilderness of Sinai until all those who had worshipped the false God were wiped out.

There was an interesting incident reported in the *Kashmir Gazette* some years back which I will like to quote here. It seems that a certain lady's husband had been working in the gulf for the past 4 years and had not come home. He had gone immediately after marriage leaving her in the heat. Unable to control herself the Lady committed Adultery. Now when her husband returned, he found out about his wife's affair from some villagers. So he proclaimed Triple Talaq and called a meeting of the village council to consign death to his wife. Now in Islam, Adultery is a capital crime and calls for death by stoning. At the village council to the surprise of one and all, the Lady as a last resort for survival defended herself saying that she committed the deed with the other man imagining him to be her husband. In other words even though she was committing the deed physically with some other man, she was with her husband in her thoughts. What do you think the village council should do? Should they allow the woman to go scot-free or should they stone her to death? If you were the woman's husband would you take the woman's excuse, forgive her and accept her as your wife?

This is exactly what people who worship Idols are claiming today. They claim to worship the true God through Idols, nature worship, Animal worship, Tree worship, material worship, hero worship and all that sort of rot. Their contention is that god is present in every of its creation including stones and clay used for making the idols. So worshipping God in Idols is okay.

The Bible strictly proclaims that God is not part of the creation. Among God's creations, only Man has part of God (the holy spirit) and even this does not make man equal to God. So the talk of self-realization that *man is god* is a nice satanic deception brought forth by the evil one to lead man away from the true God. When God made a covenant with mankind, the covenant just read "You will be my people and I will be your God; your only God". The terms of the covenant were given by the 10 commandments. God promised to bless and protect Israel as long as they were faithful to the covenant. God has kept his part of the covenant faithfully. It is the idolaters who have fallen and been unfaithful to his covenant.

The people who worship Idols are routinely breaking the first two commandments and yet claim to worship the true living God. They claim to worship and honor God through his creations. But they cannot fool God that way. Let me explicate it with a help of a parable. It is called the parable of the river.

The Parable of the River

Once upon a time, in a land far, far away, there was a rich man who was a leper. He suffered day and night and his servants would often hear him crying out in pain.

One of the servants was a Jewish lady who walked close to the living GOD and could hardly bear to listen to her master's cries, so she went to a little town a Sabbath's journey away, to talk to the prophet and ask him if he would pray for her master.

When the prophet prayed, GOD told him to send word back by the servant girl that she should tell her master to go to the river and jump in and out seven times and he would be healed!...

Upon hearing this, the master ran quickly to the river and he jumped in and out seven times!!!

And you know what, he was healed immediately! Those leper scales just fell right off! His skin was beautiful again!

The next morning, this vibrantly healthy man said to himself, what a wonder the "River" is.... I think I'll build a monument to honor the "River"....and so he did...

One day as he was praying to the "River", the undertow took him away to his death and when other's saw this, they feared the "River" and they said to themselves, we must make sacrifices to the Great and Powerful "River" for it has the power of life and death!

It wasn't long before the "River" flooded their little town and they all died in their delusion and on the day of judgment GOD said to all of them, "Depart from me, I never knew you"... and they quickly pointed out that they had honored GOD through the "River"... After all, the "River" was God's creation!

But GOD was not fooled. He was not pleased and they all were thrown with their Father, Satan, into the lake of fire.

Just like in this parable there are those who claim to worship the true God through Idols, mythological characters, material possessions, nature, Pictures of various gods and goddesses, god man, guru's, Animals, Half Human Half Animal deities, etc. These people fail to see that GOD is still a jealous GOD and He will have no other God's before him. Always, be careful not to honor the creation. Only the creator deserves to be honored.

There are many who stress that they do not worship lifeless objects. Rather they worship God through these objects. But the true god is a jealous god who cannot be fooled. The creation is distinct from the creator. Worshipping the creation rather than the creator is called Idol worship or Idolatry and is

the greatest sin that can ever be committed according to the Creator. By worshipping the creation and calling the object God, you are bringing the name of the infinite, powerful and sinless God to the level of sinners and in many cases horrible looking Animals. And God will hold you accountable to this sin one day.

Are Mythological creatures Gods?

Each idolatrous faith has its own list of God incarnate mythological beings that they give the title God. These mythological gods are worshipped as incarnations of the true God. All idol-worshipping religions right from the Mayans to the Chinese civilizations have had their own list of gods who became incarnate. Most mythological faiths believe that **when bad deeds increases on earth**, god takes on human form and comes on earth to **kill the evil doers**. The paradox here is that all mythological religions do not believe in sin.

The list of these mythological gods is massive. Roman mythology has 20,000 gods, Chinese 50,000 while Indian mythology has a whopping 330 million gods. In Chinese mythology the main gods are Chu Jung the god of fire, Kyan Yin goddesses of mercy, Kuan Ti god of war and Tsai Shen the god of wealth. In roman mythology the main gods are Venus the goddess of love, Mars the god of war, Minerva the goddess of wisdom, Hercules the greatest warrior of the world and the perfect man, Neptune the god of the sea and Jupiter the supreme God. In Indian mythology the main gods are Brahma the creator, Vishnu the preserver, Shiva the destroyer, Ganesha the god of knowledge, wisdom and wealth, Rama the ideal man god, Krishna the incarnation of Vishnu and Durga the wife of Shiva. Each and every of these are pure figments of their devotee's imagination. They never existed. As far as Indian mythology goes each and every of the 330 million Hindu gods barring Buddha are pure fiction. They have been hand made purely by their believers and worshipped. St Paul in his letter to the Romans explains this clearly when he writes,

Instead of believing what they knew was the truth about God, they deliberately chose to believe lies. So they worshiped the things God made but not the Creator himself, who is to be praised forever, Amen. That is why God abandoned them to their shameful desires.(Romans 1:25-26)

Mythological characters have never existed. They only exist in the wishful thinking of their devotees. They are a ploy of Satan to take away the glory meant to be given only to the true god.

Is Man God?

Some Idolatrous religions indulge in Human worship. It could be worship of self (worshipping oneself in front of a mirror), guru worship, sadhu worship or hero worship. They justify human worship by arguing that Man is God. Hinduism is the foremost of the religions that proclaims Man is God. According to Hindu dogmas, Man is intrinsically tied to the Brahman which is the Universal Soul called God. Hinduism teaches that everything is Brahman in their core. In other words sin and Satan too are Brahman in their core. It is for every Hindu to find this Brahman in himself. Hindus believe that every man is god. Only he has to realize that he is god. When the Hindu gets this self-realization, he becomes one like the Brahman and identical to him. This is called as to be in communion with his God. In doing so, the Hindu becomes identical to God or rather a part of God. According to Hinduism, Brahman alone exists; everything else is ultimately maya (illusion). According to the Vedas, the only way to solve a problem is to deny that the problem exists. As only the Brahman exists, the problem is also an illusion (maya).

Let me explain to you the foolishness of the Hindu concept called "Maya" with an example. Take the case of the proverbial Ostrich. An Ostrich is an extremely sturdy bird with legs so strong that its kick can stun even a fully-grown lion and make it unconscious. But when it is confronted by a predator like an attacking wolf, hyena or a lion, then instead of confronting the animal or running away from it in fear, it just closes its eyes and pretends that there is no danger. The net result is that the ostrich usually gets eaten by the predator even if the predator is much smaller than it. So it is with the Hindu dogma that problems can be solved by denying that the problem exists. A large part of India's poverty problems are because of the primitive religion it follows.

In contrast the Bible preaches that every man has a part of God in him called the Holy Spirit (The third person of the Holy Trinity). The Holy Spirit is the one that guides man in sorting the good and the bad but does not necessary interfere with his judgment. The external world calls it conscience. Man is free to choose the path he/she wants ignoring the advice of the Holy Spirit. There is an old maxim, "There is fire in the coal, but the coal is not the fire". Just like a father's genes in a man does not make a man his father, the presence of the Holy spirit in a person does not make him God. We read in the Bible how Satan deceived Adam and Eve. Satan told Adam and Eve that they would be like God if they disobeyed God by eating the forbidden fruit. And Adam and Eve wanting to be God ate the forbidden fruit. The message of the Bible is outright. Man is not God; but wanted to be God and hence got deceived by Satan and as a result brought sin into the world. Today this same Satan has managed to deceive nearly one billion Hindu souls into thinking that they are God. In reality it is not the world that is "the maya" but it is Hinduism that is the real illusion.

On second thoughts if Man was God, then there was no need for Jesus to come down on earth in human form. It would have looked ridiculous for God to come down on earth to save other Gods by his death on the cross. If we are really Brahman (god) then we can never be estranged from God due to sin or any other problem. A person once a god is always a god. Hence the concept that man is god is a lie. Such stories are found only in fables and in mythological religious lore and are a lie of Satan calculated to blind man to the fact that their sins have separated them from God and Salvation.

In Christianity the only way to be in communion with God is to accept Jesus Christ as the only way to God. Without Jesus Christ, human life has no purpose or meaning. In Christ we live, else we are spiritually dead. Humans have been reunited with God through the blood sacrifice of Jesus and his victory over sin and death. This is the one and only way to be reconciled to God. There is simply no other way. Humans are essentially sinners and hence can never be reconciled to God through their own deeds. The reunion with God is by way of **free gift** offered to all those who believe and accept Jesus Christ as their only savior. Since Salvation is a free gift from God, it can never be earned in any way like good works, penance, self-denial, meditation, yoga etc. The choice is straightforward. It is Christ or Satan, eternal life or eternal death. There is no neutral ground. Choice is yours. Decide today; tomorrow maybe be too late.

Idolatry in the Scriptures

Paul describes the origin of idolatry in Rom. 1:22-25: wherein man changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man and to beasts.

In Scripture, idolatry is regarded as of heathen origin, and as being imported among the Hebrews through contact with heathen nations. During their long residence in Egypt the Hebrews fell into idolatry, and it was long before they were delivered from it (Josh. 24:14; Ezek. 20:7). Many a token of God's displeasure fell upon them because of this sin. In all of history, Israel is the nation that has suffered the most; just because of the sin of Idolatry.

The idolatry learned in Egypt was probably rooted out from among the people during the forty years' wanderings; but when the Jews entered Palestine, they came into contact with the monuments and associations of the idolatry of the old Canaanite races, and showed a constant tendency to depart from the living God and follow the idolatrous practices of those heathen nations. It was their great national sin, which was only effectually rebuked by the Babylonian exile. That exile finally purified the Jews of all idolatrous tendencies.

The first and second commandments are directed against idolatry of every form. Individuals and communities were equally amenable to the rigorous code. The individual offender was devoted to destruction (Ex. 22:20). His nearest relatives were not only bound to denounce him and deliver him up to punishment (Deut. 13:20-10), but their hands were to strike the first blow when, on the evidence of two witnesses at least, he was stoned (Deut. 17:2-7). Idolatry was capital offense and a national sin (Remember that YAHWEH was the head of the nation of Israel).

To attempt to seduce others to false worship was a crime of equal enormity (Deut 13:6-10). An idolatrous nation shared the same fate. No facts are more strongly declared in the Old Testament than that the extermination of the Canaanites was the punishment of their idolatry (Ex. 34:15, 16; Deut. 7; 12:29-31; 20:17), and that the calamities of the Israelites were due to the same cause (Jer. 2:17). A city guilty of idolatry was looked upon as a cancer in the state; it was considered to be in rebellion, and treated according to the laws of war. Its inhabitants and all their cattle were put to death. YAHWEH was the theocratic King of Israel, the civil Head of the commonwealth, and therefore to an Israelite idolatry was a state offense (1 Sam. 15:23), high treason. It was acid Satanism. On taking possession of the land, the Jews were commanded to destroy all traces of every kind of the existing idolatry of the Canaanites (Ex. 23:24, 32; 34:13; Deut. 7:5, 25; 12:1-3).

The road to Insanity : Why people believe in Idols?

Maimonides explains that idolatry is not a single step, rather it's a process. In the old days, they'd carve a piece of stone and call it the "sun god." They wanted to pay tribute to God as creator of the sun. But before long, they were worshipping the sun itself. They believed that something other than God was the ultimate source of strength and salvation.

The Torah tells us that during the incident of the Golden Calf, one man named Chur arose to protest. So how did the crowd respond? Their connection to this "idol" had grown so strong that they mobbed Chur and murdered him.

When Moses came down from the mountain and smashed the Tablets, he issued a pronouncement to all Jews: "You can now turn back and avoid tragedy," said Moses. "Stop worshipping the Golden Calf and affirm your loyalty to God." Only the Tribe of Levi, comprising about 3% of the Jewish population, accepted Moses' words. The other 97% remained stuck in their failed venture. This is exactly the case why Idol worship is the number one religion in the world today far bigger than even Christianity. There are nearly 2.5 billion people worshipping non-existent gods and goddesses in the world today - nearly 1 billion of these on the Indian subcontinent, 900 million in China and another 600 million in other parts of the world. The problem is People do not want to leave their failed ventures, the Idols. They know these Idols are mythological and exist only in the dreams of their followers; yet they are not ready to give up these failed ventures.

Recently at a young adult discussion group in Los Angeles, my colleague Rabbi Nacum tried an experiment. He held up a \$20 bill and made the following announcement: "We are going to auction off this \$20 bill to the highest bidder. The only catch is that whoever finishes as the second-highest bidder, also has to pay their bid, getting nothing in return."

The bidding began in a fun and festive tone. Quickly the bidding passed the \$20 mark and was down to two final bidders. The mood in the room turned serious, as everyone realized that someone was about to lose a lot of money! Each bidder had to outbid the other in order to avoid becoming the second-highest bidder who would pay for nothing! The bidding reached a frenzied panic, the two contestants, locked into a no-win situation. The room was breathless. And finally, that \$20 bill sold for \$76.

It's crazy. It's true what they say: "The fight for religion is the fight for insanity."

Today every religion is claiming to be only true religion. There are some others which foolishly claim that all religions inspite of their contradicting

dogmas lead to the same God. But the bottom line is no one wants to give up. Even mythological religions with all their foolishness and hocus pocus are in the fray.

Many times in life, you hear a little voice in your head saying, 'Stop the idolatry.' Something will challenge you to stand up and be counted. In which camp are you? Do you have the clarity and conviction to stay on the right track? Because how you respond will have implications not only for you, but also for generations after you. It is a matter of your soul and of your generations to come. There is no second chance. Everyone has his moment. When you hear that voice, stand up and be counted!". The Problem today is that we have lost sight of our priorities. We are being swept away by the mob. Like the case of the Hindu Sage who questioned my preaching that **Jesus is the only way to Salvation**. The reason he gave me was whether Hindu greats were wrong in their beliefs. Whether the beliefs of nearly one billion present day Hindus and two billion Hindus who have lived and died in the past are false? My answer to him was simple. *"Do not count what they taught or believed. Believe in the Truth and you will be saved. For every Hindu who claims that Hinduism is the Truth, I can show you 10 non-Hindus who will say Hinduism is false. Does this make Hinduism true or false? Numbers don't count, only the Truth does. And the Truth is Jesus Christ"*. My story is a little different. When I heard the little voice-saying stand up and be counted, I stood up, received Jesus, got baptized and was saved. What about you? Are you willing to be saved? Then take up your cross and follow the God who can save you.

Idolatry is alive and kicking. It is well into the 21st century. Let's hope we can eradicate this disease, this deadliest of all sins.

Can Idols consume Offerings?

In the past there have been thousands of religions and even today the number of religions in the world stands at approximately 1,00,000 with four new religions created every day. Each civilization had its own gods. As the civilization came into being the Gods were "created" and as the civilizations died down the gods were "destroyed" with them. The most important of these Gods was Baal the animal headed god of the known world popular as the god of knowledge and wisdom. In actual reality he was as powerless as any of the other present day mythological gods. But the myth of Baal was kept alive by his devotees who spread stories that this god was consuming offerings of food and drink offered by his devotees. It took the mighty prophet of God Daniel to expose the trick of the devotees. You can read about it in the book of Daniel chapter 14.

Today also we hear similar stories about mythological gods. Some Indian mythological gods have been allegedly reported to be seen consuming offerings presented by their devotees. Is such a thing possible? Can unreality eat food? Do we need another Daniel to expose this forgery? Indian mythological gods are not the only ones in the news these days. The ancient Egyptian symbol of life, the "Ankh" has been reportedly sighted by many people on fishes, crabs, fruits, vegetables and even bread in recent times. There have been fruits and vegetables borne by trees and plants in the form of the ankh. In days of yore, the Ankh was as sacred to the Egyptians as the cross is to modern day Christians. It disappeared two thousand years ago only to make reappearance in the twentieth century.

What inference can we derive from these happenings? The Truth is mythological creatures cannot eat and drink or indulge in gluttony. It is either the handiwork of the devotees or of the demons behind the idols. The fruits and vegetables in the form of the sacred symbols of the mythological gods are the handiwork of Satan to spread confusion among god's people. God has better things to do than sprout fruits and vegetables related to mythological gods or eat offerings.

Should Christian's eat food offered to Idols?

It is very common for Christians to partake of the food and sweets offered by non-Christians during their festivals. This is especially true in India. Many Christians have no qualms about eating of this food and sweets. But do you know that this food and sweets **have been offered as sacrifice to their Gods** by their priests before they are given to Christians as *Prasadam* or other festival sweets. This is the case with every major festival of idolaters. The sacrificial offerings (food, sweets and drinks) are placed in front of the gods/deities. Then the blessings of the deities are invoked on the people doing the offerings by the priest or elders, then the offerings are blessed and distributed to the people and well wishers. These are the same offerings that Christians consume during pagan festivals in India. But what does Gods word have to say about these sweets that you consume during pagan festivals.

In 1Corinthians 10:20-21, St Paul says,

*No, but I say that **the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God**; and I do not want you to become participants in demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons.*

Here is where you're in grave danger. What pagan's sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God. The issue is not the food that the pagans give you, or the molecules of the food, but the *spiritual* realities of that food. The food has been earlier offered to and has been blessed by demons. **Pagan Idol worshipping religions are steeped neck deep in satanic rites and rituals.** I would request you to read the book **Death of A Guru** by **Rabi Maharaj** to understand the full meaning of the above statement. The book is published by **OM publishers**, a Christian book publishing house in India. It contains the autobiography of one Rabi Maharaj, a Hindu Brahmin and his conversion to Christianity. This book explains in detail what St Paul meant by his words as given in 1Cor 20-21. This book is a great testimony to not only Hindus, but to those who believe that all religions are basically the same or lead to the same conclusions, and also to those who are leaning toward eastern beliefs.

Further St Paul goes on to say,

*As concerning the Gentiles who believe, we have written and concluded that they observe no such thing, **save only that they keep themselves from things offered to idols**, and from blood, and from strangled, and from lewdness.*

*But as for the Gentiles who have accepted the faith, we have communicated to them our decision that **they are carefully to abstain from anything sacrificed to an idol**, from blood, from what is strangled, and from fornication." (Acts 21:25)*

Additionally the Bible says,

I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth. But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, **to eat things sacrificed unto idols**, and to commit fornication. (Rev 2:13-14)

Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, **and to eat things sacrificed unto idols**. And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. (Rev 2:20-22)

Throughout Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, he rebukes Christians for eating food offered to idols. But there is one place where he seems to say that consuming food offered to Idols is okay. In 1Corinthians 8:4-13, It seems like Paul is saying that Christians eating food offered to Idols is ok. To comprehend why he says this, we have to go back to the background history of the time. We must understand that the worship of false gods was an integral part of social and commercial life at that time. The vast majority of Corinthians were idol worshipping pagans whose all social events were celebrated in their temples. In an age where superstition was the rule, such worship extended to every sphere of life. Christians were a miniscule minority. The other non-idolatrous community around, the Jews, too hated the Christians.

The usual menu at the social festivals would have included the meat and other foods offered to the idol gods as a sacrificial offerings and blessed by it. Paul understood that Corinthian Christians will confront the issue both in the markets during social events as well as in the homes of unbelievers. All the food that Pagans put on the table during their feast was blessed by their deities (demons in Christian parlance). So if Christians attended these feasts they had to eat some of the food. If they did not attend then it was considered insulting to the hosts. Rejecting the food offered by their Pagan brothers and relatives after their sacrifices also did not auger well for the Christians. It created strife, contention and irritations among their friends and relatives. So St Paul went soft on the converted Christians over here and allowed the leeway. The leeway was for one time in history, not always. But in general he maintained that Christians should never eat food offered to Idols. In deed it is the case. Just two chapters later in the same letter St Paul strongly condemns Christians for eating food offered to idols.

As seen, the sweets offered by non-Christians during their festivals or pilgrimages have been blessed by Satan and his demons. The Bible strongly commands Christians to refrain from consuming this food, sweets and drinks.

And scores of Christians do follow the Bible in this regard. As a result many believing Christians in India flatly and strongly reject any food items offered to them during the *Puja* celebrations conducted in their work places. If any sweets are offered to them after some pagan festival then most believing Christians discreetly take these sweets and feed them to roadside beggars or to stray dogs. This has given rise to strifes, contentions and irritations in offices and has resulted in glaring discriminations against Christians due to their religious beliefs in the one true God. But that is what Jesus talked about in Matthew 10:22. He said, "You will be hated by all because of my name, but whoever endures to the end will be saved". If you want to follow Jesus Christ fully, then Satan's followers will try to torment you at each and every step of your life. These torments may come in the form of discriminations in offices or hatred in your hometowns. When facing persecutions remember the final promise of Jesus Christ; "Whoever endures to the end will be saved".

In conclusion, as Bible believers living under the Grace of the Lord, we know that we are not under bondage to the Law but to the Spirit of the Living God. Therefore, "*if we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit*" (Gal.5:25) to the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us keep away from foods offered to idols and demonic spirits and partake food only from the table of the Lord.

Idolatry in the Western Religions

Idolatry is the norm in eastern religions and countries dominated by them. But what about western religions? Do western religions also indulge in Idolatry?

Theoretically all western religions proclaim idolatry as satanic. But practically many western religions are also hooked onto idolatry and its various fruits. As mentioned earlier, Idolatry does come alone. It comes in a satanic bundle with various goodies and gifts attached designed to transport idolaters straight to the deepest part of hell. Some of these are yoga, tantra, astrology, religious pluralism, witchcraft, animal and human sacrificing to deities, etc.

Idolatry in Christianity

Idolatry is present in the biggest Christian sect, the Catholic religion too. Catholics routinely worship Mary and pray to her daily. The most common of these prayers is called the Rosary. In addition the saints too are worshipped and prayed to on specific days.

Ironically many Christians, both Catholics and protestants around the world have hooked themselves onto yoga. Many Christians are deceived into believing that yoga is just another harmless exercise. But those who had been practicing/teaching yoga for years in the past and have left it now know how much it is dominated by the powers of darkness. Today hundreds of Eastern religions are marketing idolatry in Christian countries under innocuous—even scientific-sounding—brand names. Yoga is one of the most exciting baits of idolatry. Yoga is a demonic practice used to open ones mind to visitations from demonic beings. The powers acquired by a yogi are the same as acquired by a Tantrik or other witchcraft practitioners. The heavenly visitations, astral travel, unearthly music and ecstasy encountered while doing yoga is the same as got by taking drugs. Why? Because both come from the same source. Demons!!

Yoga is not the only occultist power practiced by Christians. Many Christians also consult astrologers, soothsayers, oracles, tantriks and sadhus. Many others especially those married to idolaters worship the idol gods of their spouses. They are conned into believing that all religions are paths to the same God.

In every idolatrous religion we have the houses of idolaters being haunted by demons. Whenever any idolater dies, these sightings become more. Objects are suddenly moved by some invisible force in or around their houses. Idolaters assume that these are caused by the spirit of the deceased. Nothing is far from the truth. The objects are moved by evil spirits, demons

in biblical parlance and not by the spirit of the deceased. It is these demons masquerading as different deities who are the real power behind the idols and every other philosophy that denies the true God his rightful place as creator and lord.

Take a peek at the Hare Krishna followers. Their religious hippie type of life called Bhakti Yoga is via drugs, mysticism, sexual promiscuity and perversions. All these do not come from the God of the Bible. So profound and common is Satanism in this world that St Paul calls on all Christians to wear the armor of God,

Put on the armor of God so that you may be able to stand firm against the tactics of the devil. For our struggle is not with flesh and blood but with the principalities, with the powers, with the world rulers of this present darkness, with the evil spirits in the heavens. Therefore, put on the armor of God, that you may be able to resist on the evil day and, having done everything, to hold your ground. (Ephesians 6:11-13)

Truly there is great truth in the writings of St Paul. No one knows from which side the devil is going to attack next. Already he has deceived scores of people into believing that there is no god, that idolatry is the highest form of godly worship and sexual immorality is a way of life.

Idolatry in Islam

Islam strongly condemns the Christian concept of the triune God. It claims to be a perfect monotheistic religion. But this is far from true. Mohammedans routinely practice Dargah worship, which literally means "puja of the grave". Ironically, these dargahs are mostly visited by devout Muslims who believe in miracles. There is dhoop, agarbattis, music, songs and people with various problems come to get rid of problems and take back tabeez. The dargah of Hazrat Khwaja Muinuddin Chisty in Ajmer is one of the main idolatry centers of Islam and one of the holiest places of worship in India for Muslims. Dargah worship in Islam is akin to Mary worship in the Catholic religion. Just like Catholics will deny that they worship Mary and the saints, so also Muslims will strongly deny the worshipping of muslim saints in dargahs.

If this is bad, then worse is what happens at Hajj. Mohammedans worship a black stone and perform numerous pagan rites like throwing stones at Mina, running between two hillocks and circling the kabba. Muslims claim that all these rites have a strong basis in Islam, but this is not so. These rites are nowhere found in the Koran, but are found in history books describing the pre-islamic pagan culture of Arabia.

Muslims claim that the revered "black stone" (Alhajar Al-Aswad) is a special divine meteorite that which pre-dates creation and which fell at the foot of Adam and Eve and was later rediscovered by Abraham. It is presently embedded in the southeastern corner of the Kaba. Muslims touch and kiss

the black stone during Hajj but non-Muslims are strictly forbidden to even touch it.

In reality, the truth about the black stone is given in ancient Arabian history. Before Muhammad appeared, the Kaaba was surrounded by 360 idols, and every Arab house had its god. Arabs also believed in jinn (subtle beings), and some vague divinity with many offspring. Among the major deities of the pre-Islamic era were al-Lat ("the Goddess"), worshiped in the shape of a square stone; al-Uzzah ("the Mighty"), a goddess identified with the morning star and worshiped as a thigh-bone-shaped slab of granite between al Talf and Mecca; Manat, the goddess of destiny, worshiped as a black stone on the road between Mecca and Medina; and the moon god, Hubal, whose worship was connected with the Black Stone of the Kaaba. The stones were said to have fallen from the sun, moon, stars, and planets and to represent cosmic forces. The so-called Black Stone (actually the color of burnt umber) that Muslims revere today is the same one that their forebears had worshiped well before Muhammad and that they believed had come from the moon. Mohammedans don't allow any scientific investigation on the stone for the fear of the truth about it being revealed. No scientific investigation has ever been performed on the stone either. In 930 AD, the stone was removed and shattered by an Iraqi sect of Qarmatians, but the pieces were later returned. The pieces, sealed in pitch and held in place by silver wire, measure about 10 inches in diameter altogether and several feet high; they are worshipped today in patched-together form. If this is not idolatry then pray tell me what it is?

A few Biblical Case Studies on Idolatry

In the sections below are presented a few case studies on Idolatry. The gist of the studies is to show how Idolatry adversely affects man's relation with God. It always throws light on the position of those who have succumbed to this dreaded disease.

Idols led to the downfall of Solomon

Israel reached the zenith of its power and glory under King Solomon the son of David. Solomon build the most magnificent temple for God in Israel and the spirit of the God came to dwell in it. Such was Solomon's splendor that when Jesus wanted to talk about a glorious kingdom, he used the kingdom of Solomon for his illustration (Luke 12:27). When Jesus wanted to compare His wisdom with the wisdom of some other man, he compared it with the Wisdom of Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived (Matthew 12:42).

When God appeared to Solomon and asked him for one wish, Solomon chose wisdom over wealth, glory and long life. God was so pleased with him that he gave him wisdom and also wealth, fame and glory. Kings from all over the world came to ask his counsel over matters of their kingdom. Many kings offered their daughter in marriage to him. Solomon married some of them forsaking God's commandment to marry only Jewish woman. And when these women came to stay with Solomon they came with their mythological Idols. This was the beginning of the downfall of Solomon. To please his wives, Solomon constructed temples for their Idols. And the true God was not pleased with this and his spirit moved out of the temple dedicated to him.

Solomon forgot the advice his father had given him on his deathbed.

"As for you, Solomon, my son, know the God of your father and serve him with a perfect heart and a willing soul, for the LORD searches all hearts and understands all the mind's thoughts. If you seek him, he will let himself be found by you; but if you abandon him, he will cast you off forever. (1 Chronicles 28:9)

When the time of David's death drew near, he gave these instructions to his son Solomon: "I am going the way of all mankind. Take courage and be a man. Keep the mandate of the LORD, your God, following his ways and observing his statutes, commands, ordinances, and decrees as they are written in the law of Moses, that you may succeed in whatever you do, wherever you turn, and the LORD may fulfill the promise he made on my behalf when he said, 'If your sons so conduct themselves that they remain faithful to me with their whole heart and with their whole soul, you shall always have someone of your line on the throne of Israel.' (1 Kings 2:1-4)

But if you and your descendants ever withdraw from me, fail to keep the commandments and statutes which I set before you, and proceed to venerate and worship strange gods, I will cut off Israel from the land I gave them and repudiate the temple I have consecrated to my honor. Israel shall become a proverb and a byword among all nations, and this temple shall become a heap of ruins. Every passerby shall catch his breath in amazement, and ask, 'Why has the LORD done this to the land and to this temple?' Men will answer: 'They forsook the LORD, their God, who brought their fathers out of the land of Egypt; they adopted strange gods which they worshiped and served. That is why the LORD has brought down upon them all this evil.'"
(1 Kings 9:6-9)

We learn about Solomon's downfall in 1 Kings chapter 11. In 1 Kings 11:1 the word "strange" means "foreign." Rulers would often marry foreign wives for political reasons. In this verse we see that Solomon married the daughter of Pharaoh the King of Egypt. He also married the daughters of other foreign kings. The problem was that these foreign women would bring their own religions and their own false gods with them! Was Solomon paying attention to what God had said (Exodus 34:11-17; Deut. 7:1-5)? Why did God tell the Jews not to marry foreign man or women (Deut. 7:4)?

But you, on your part, must keep the commandments I am giving you today. "I will drive out before you the Amorites, Canaanites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. Take care, therefore, not to make a covenant with these inhabitants of the land that you are to enter; else they will become a snare among you. Tear down their altars; smash their sacred pillars, and cut down their sacred poles. You shall not worship any other god, for the LORD is 'the Jealous One'; a jealous God is he. Do not make a covenant with the inhabitants of that land; else, when they render their wanton worship to their gods and sacrifice to them, one of them may invite you and you may partake of his sacrifice. Neither shall you take their daughters as wives for your sons; otherwise, when their daughters render their wanton worship to their gods, they will make your sons do the same. "You shall not make for yourselves molten gods. (Exodus 34:11-17)

"When the LORD, your God, brings you into the land which you are to enter and occupy, and dislodges great nations before you--the Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites: seven nations more numerous and powerful than you-- and when the LORD, your God, delivers them up to you and you defeat them, you shall doom them. Make no covenant with them and show them no mercy. You shall not intermarry with them, neither giving your daughters to their sons nor taking their daughters for your sons. For they would turn your sons from following me to serving other gods, and then the wrath of the LORD would flare up against you and quickly destroy you. "But this is how you must deal with them: Tear down their altars, smash their sacred pillars, chop down their sacred poles, and destroy their idols by fire. (Deut 7:1-5)

And this is exactly what happened to Solomon. Solomon started worshipping false gods and forgot the statutes of God. He married hundreds of woman (1Kings11:3) against the commandments of God (Deut 17:17). His wives turned his heart to Idol gods.

When Solomon was old his wives had turned his heart to strange gods, and his heart was not entirely with the LORD, his God, as the heart of his father David had been. (1Kings 11:4)

Solomon built high places (shrines, places of worship) for all his wives to honor their pagan gods. These shrines dotted the hills surrounding Jerusalem. Solomon himself worshipped in two of these shrines - Astarte, the goddess of the Sidonians, and Milcom, the idol of the Ammonites. As was the pagan custom, children were sacrificed to these gods in fire! Parents tried to show their love for this false god by sacrificing their own child! What a cruel and wicked practice in the name of religion! Such practices flourish even today in idol worshipping countries like China and India. In 1 Kings 11:11 and in the verses following you can read about the terrible punishment and trouble that came upon Solomon and those who followed him because of this great sin of Idolatry.

Centuries later the prophet Nehemiah writing about Solomon stated,

Did not Solomon, the king of Israel, sin because of them? Though among the many nations there was no king like him, and though he was beloved of his God and God had made him king over all Israel, yet even he was made to sin by foreign women. (Nehemiah 13:26)

Solomon, who is called The Bible's biggest fool had so much going for him but he let certain things become more important to him than God and God's Word. And in doing so, ultimately paid the price for his sins.

Elijah and the Prophets of Baal : The test by Fire

The word Elijah means "Yahweh is God". Yahweh demonstrated his mighty power through the prophet Elijah. Elijah, was a biblical prophet who lived in the 9th century B.C.E. in the Kingdom of Israel during the reign of King Ahab and Queen Jezebel, who ruled between 869 B.C.E. and 850 B.C.E.

His prophetic fervor and fierce defense of God in the face of pagan influences in comparison with all other Hebrew biblical prophets earned him the honor of being the 'guardian angel' of the Jewish people. Because he was considered the strongest defender of Yahweh, he was said to be the forerunner of the Messiah. In the Book of Malachi, Malachi, who was the last of the Hebrew prophets, states that Elijah would reappear just before the coming of the Messiah (Malachi 3:1)

An example of Elijah the Prophet's strong defense of the one true God was demonstrated during the reign of King Ahab and Queen Jezebel, which is described in the first biblical Book of Kings (I Kings 18:1-39). King Ahab was the 7th king of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Queen Jezebel was the beautiful daughter of Ethbaal, the priest-king of Tyre (Tyre is a coastal city in present-day Lebanon). The Tyrian culture in which she came from worshipped idols, or multiple Gods each god doing a certain function (like it is happening in Indian religions today). At the urging of Queen Jezebel, the Hebrews began to worship the idol Baal. Anyone not complying with the Queen wishes was tortured and murdered. Elijah the Prophet saw what was happening and vigorously stressed monotheism to all in the kingdom and stated that there was no other reality except the one true God of the Israelites or Hebrews. As punishment for the transgressions of the Hebrews in worshipping Baal, Elijah the Prophet prophesied that a great drought would occur in the kingdom of King Ahab and Queen Jezebel, which soon struck the kingdom and lasted for three and a half years until Yahweh told Elijah the Prophet to appear before King Ahab whereupon he would then send rain down onto the earth.

According to the Bible, a contest of strength was to be held to determine the true God. At that time and in that kingdom, the sacred animal that represented the idol Baal was the bull, which symbolized Baal's power and fertility. In this contest, each of the contestants would attempt to offer a young bull to his God. The 450 prophets of Baal comprised the contestants for Baal, and Elijah the Prophet was the contestant for the God of the Hebrews. The contestant whose sacrifice was miraculously accepted was the prophet of the true God. This acceptance was to be demonstrated as a fire consuming the burnt offering.

The Baal worshippers were asked to take first strike. The 450 prophets of Baal went first. They sang, prayed, danced around, and eventually they began to cut their arms, hoping that the sight of their own human blood would cause Baal to answer by fire and accept their sacrifice. They did this all day long.

We see such incidences happening in India and China also. Idol worshippers will steal other people's children and offer these as sacrifices to their gods. They will cut them selves, walk on fire, even take their own lives so that their life in the next reincarnation (remember Idol worshipper believe in reincarnation) will be better.

But the result was the same. Like it happens in India, no Baal answered. No fire came down from heaven.

When it was Elijah's turn to demonstrate the power of his God, he asked to put cut the bull, lay it in the trench and poured water in the trench so that the bull was fully soaked in water. Elijah had hardly started praying when the *all-consuming fire* descended from heaven and consumed not only his burnt offering, but also the wood, the stones, and the earth; and it even licked

clean all the water that was in the trench. When the people who had gathered saw this, all the people in attendance flung themselves on their faces and cried out: "Yahweh is God, Yahweh alone is God!"

Immediately Elijah called on the people to slay the 450 prophets of Baal for leading God's children away from the real god. The people complied and Elijah had all the 450 prophets executed.

This incident is found in the Bible in the book of Kings, chapter 18 and is as given below.

After some time, in the third year of the drought, the LORD said to Elijah, "Go and present yourself to King Ahab, and I will send rain." So Elijah started out.

The famine in Samaria was at its worst, so Ahab called in Obadiah, who was in charge of the palace. (Obadiah was a devout worshiper of the LORD, and when Jezebel was killing the LORD's prophets, Obadiah took a hundred of them, hid them in caves in two groups of fifty, and provided them with food and water.) Ahab said to Obadiah, "Let us go and look at every spring and every stream bed in the land to see if we can find enough grass to keep the horses and mules alive. Maybe we won't have to kill any of our animals." They agreed on which part of the land each one would explore, and set off in different directions.

As Obadiah was on his way, he suddenly met Elijah. He recognized him, bowed low before him, and asked, "Is it really you, sir?"

"Yes, I'm Elijah," he answered. "Go and tell your master the king that I am here."

Obadiah answered, "What have I done that you want to put me in danger of being killed by King Ahab?"

By the living LORD, your God, I swear that the king has made a search for you in every country reported that you were not in his country, Ahab would require that ruler to swear that you could not be found. And now you want me to go and tell him that you are here?

What if the spirit of the LORD carries you off to some unknown place as soon as I leave? Then, when I tell Ahab that you are here and he can't find you, he will put me to death. Remember that I have been a devout worshiper of the LORD ever since I was a boy. Haven't you heard that when Jezebel was killing the prophets of the LORD I hid a hundred of them in caves, in two groups of fifty, and supplied them with food and water? So how can you order me to go and tell the king that you are here? He will kill me!"

Elijah answered, "By the living LORD Almighty, whom I serve, I promise that I will present myself to the king today."

So Obadiah went to King Ahab and told him, and Ahab set off to meet Elijah. When Ahab saw him, he said, "So there you are--the worst troublemaker in Israel!"

"I am not the troublemaker," Elijah answered. "You are--you and your father. You are disobeying the LORD's commands and worshiping the idols of Baal. Now order all the people of Israel to meet me at Mount Carmel. Bring along the 450 prophets of Baal and the 400 prophets of the goddess Asherah who are supported by Queen Jezebel."

So Ahab summoned all the Israelites and the prophets of Baal to meet at Mount Carmel. Elijah went up to the people and said, "How much longer will it take you to make up your minds? If the LORD is God, worship him; but if Baal is God, worship him!" But the people didn't say a word.

Then Elijah said, "I am the only prophet of the LORD still left, but there are 450 prophets of Baal. Bring two bulls; let the prophets of Baal take one, kill it, cut it in pieces, and put it on the wood--but don't light the fire. I will do the same with the other bull. Then let the prophets of Baal pray to their god, and I will pray to the LORD, and the god who answers by sending fire--he is God."

The people shouted their approval.

Then Elijah said to the prophets of Baal. "Since there are so many of you, you take a bull and prepare it first. Pray to your god, but don't set fire to the wood."

They took the bull that was brought to them, prepared it, and prayed to Baal until noon. They shouted. "Answer us. Baal!" and kept dancing around the altar they had built. But no answer came.

At noon Elijah started making fun of them; "Pray louder! He is a god! Maybe he is day-dreaming or relieving himself, or perhaps he's gone off on a trip! Or maybe he's sleeping, and you've got to wake him up!" So the prophets prayed louder and cut themselves with knives and daggers, according to their ritual, until blood flowed. They kept on ranting and raving until the middle of the afternoon; but no answer came, not sound was heard.

Then Elijah said to the people, "Come closer to me." and they all gathered around him. He set about repairing the altar of the LORD which had been torn down. He took twelve stones, one for each of the twelve tribes named for the sons of Jacob, the man to whom the LORD had given the name Israel. With these stones he rebuilt the altar for the worship of the LORD. He dug a trench around it, large enough to hold about four gallons of water. Then he placed the wood on the altar, cut the bull in pieces, and laid it on the wood. He said, "Fill four jars with water and pour it on the offering and the wood." They did so, and he said, "Do it again"--and they did. "Do it once more," he

said--and they did. The water ran down around the altar and filled the trench.

At the hour of the afternoon sacrifice the prophet Elijah approached the altar and prayed, "O LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, prove now that you are the God of Israel. and that I am your servant and have done all this at your command. Answer me, LORD, answer me, so that this people will know that you, the LORD, are God and that you are bringing them back to yourself."

The LORD sent fire down, and it burned up the sacrifice, the wood, and the stones, scorched the earth and dried up the water in the trench.

When the people saw this, they threw themselves on the ground and exclaimed. "The LORD is God; the LORD alone is God!"

Elijah ordered, "Seize the prophets of Baal; don't let any of them get away!" The people seized them all, and Elijah led them down to Kishon Brook and killed them.

Then Elijah said to King Ahab, "Now, go and eat. I hear the roar of rain approaching." While Ahab went to eat, Elijah climbed to the top of Mount Carmel. where he bowed down to the ground with his head between his knees. He said to his servant. "Go and look toward the sea."

The servant went and returned, saying, "I didn't see a thing." Seven times in all Elijah told him to go and look. The seventh time he said, "I saw a little could no bigger than a man's hand, coming up from the sea."

Elijah ordered his servant, "Go to King Ahab and tell him to get in his chariot and go back home before the rain stops him."

In a little while the sky was covered with dark clouds, the wind began to blow, and a heavy rain began to fall. Ahab got in his chariot and started back to Jezreel. The power of the LORD came on Elijah; he fastened his clothes tight around his waist and ran ahead of Ahab all the way to Jezreel.(1 Kings 18)

The Israelites in Egypt : Power of the Living God

For several centuries Egypt was the splendor of the world. They were the modern day America, the center of all civilization. They had the most impressive army, the most advanced civilization and the best slaves that enabled them to convert an arid desert into fertile prairies and build massive structures like the Pyramids.

Egypt owed its great wealth to the forces of nature. Gentle annual floods and consistently sunny weather allowed the Egyptians to raise more grain more easily than any other kingdom, and the Egyptians credited a whole pantheon of mythological gods for restraining the forces of chaos and maintaining the orderliness of nature in their land. The Egyptians were crediting their Gods for their prosperity. God silently watched this for 400 years (as is happening today), until one fine day he decided enough is enough. God devised ten plagues (that have become famous today as the **Ten Plagues of Egypt**) that dramatically demonstrated not only to the Egyptians, but also to the Israelites, that the gods of Egypt were impotent and no match for the sovereign God. The Israelites simply had to sit and watch, while God worked His wonders. God took on Egypt when Egypt was at its peak of its glory. The plagues devastated Egypt and converted it from the world superpower to an isolated barren land. Today Egypt is a third world country and Egyptians can only boast of their past glory.

There were ten plagues in all. Let us review each of these plagues and see their significance.

The Ten Plagues on Egypt - What were they?

God redeemed the children of Israel from bondage in Egypt with an outstretched arm and with mighty wonders. These came in the form of plagues which He poured out upon the land of Egypt. God is merciful, but He is also HOLY. The plagues were more than just a demonstration of God's power, each one was a judgment upon the idolatrous worship of a pagan Egyptian deity.

1. The first plague was blood (dahm) - Exodus 7.14-24. This was an attack on Hapi, the father of the gods, who was "god" of the Nile, the one who brings water to all Egypt for life. He was responsible for watering the meadows and bringing the dew. But most importantly he brought fertile inundation, the rising of the Nile. As a fertility god, he is associated with Osiris.

The Nile was considered the link from this life to the next. The Nile was considered the blood of Osiris. The priests of Egypt held blood in abhorrence, yet they cruelly sported with blood of the captive Israelites whose children they caused to be cast into the Nile. The Egyptians worshipped the river, but when its waters turned to blood it must have excited their loathing and detestation, while the calamity would cover them with confusion and shame of their great god Hapi being defamed. Other deities connected with the Nile are Amon, and Khnum who was the guardian of the Nile.

2. The second plague was frogs (tz'fahr'day-a) - Exodus 8.1-15. This was an attack on Heka (Heqt) the toad goddess, wife of Kneph (Khnum) who was "goddess" of the land. Also, Heka was the goddess of the resurrection and procreative power. Frogs were consecrated to the Osiris and were the symbol

of inspiration. Frogs and toads were very sacred to the Egyptians. If someone killed a frog, even unintentionally, the person was punishable by death.

3. The third plague was gnats (kinnim) - Exodus 8.16-19. This was an attack on Geb, "the great cackler," who was "god" of the earth or vegetation. He was the father of Osiris and husband of Nut.

4. The fourth plague was flies (arov) - Exodus 8.20-32. This was an attack on Khephi, scarab, who was the "god" of insects. The plague of beetle, a scarab, was an emblem of Re (Ra), the sun god.

5. The fifth plague was livestock (dever) - Exodus 9.1-7. This was an attack on Apis, who was the bull "god." His counterpart was Hathor, the cow goddess. Their place of worship was at On (Heliopolis). The Egyptians held many beasts in idolatrous veneration. The lion, wolf, dog, cat, ape, and goat were very sacred to them; but especially the ox, heifer, and ram (Khnun). The soul of their god Osiris was believed to reside in the body of the bull, Apis. Mnevis, the bull god, was symbol of fertility.

6. The sixth plague was boils (sh'chir) - Exodus 9.8-12. This was an attack on Thoth (Imhotep), a half man half animal god, who the "god" of medicine and intelligence/wisdom. The Egyptians had several medical deities, to whom, on special occasions, they sacrificed humans. They were burnt alive on a high altar, and their ashes were cast into the air, that with every scattered ash a blessing might descend upon the people. Moses took ashes from the furnace and cast them into the air. The ashes were scattered by the wind descending upon all the priests, people, and beasts as boils, thus shaming the god Thoth.

7. The seventh plague was hail (barad) - Exodus 9.13-35. This was an attack on Nut, who was the sky "goddess," for this was harvest time, the time of plenty. Like her husband Geb, Yahweh attacked and destroyed the crops. She was the mother of Osiris. Also, this was an attack on Isis, goddess of life, and Seth, protector of crops.

8. The eighth plague was locust (arbeh) - Exodus 10.1-20. This was an attack on Anubis, who was the "god" of the fields, especially cemeteries. This plague finishes up the work that was done by the hail. They devoured every herb of the land and fruit of the trees. Also, this plague was an attack on Isis, protector of against locust, and Seth, protector of crops.

9. The ninth plague was darkness (choshekh) - Exodus 10.21-29. This was an attack on Ra or Amon-Re, the sun "god." Darkness was considered a creation of Seth, evil principle destroyer of Osiris. It seemed Re (Ra), the sun god, was dead; and Seth had killed him. This plague was so terrible that it a darkness that could be felt! At the same time that the Egyptians had darkness, the Israelites had light. He is believed to be the physical father of all Pharaohs. Pharaoh was the king of all gods.

10. The tenth plague was death of the first-born (makkat b'khorot) - Exodus 11,12. This was an attack on Pharaoh, who was the "god-king." Pharaoh was considered a god, and his first-born son, who would succeed him on the throne. In fact, first-born people and animals were often worshipped. Pharaoh was considered an incarnation of Ra, the sun god, and Osiris, the giver of life. Because Pharaoh's son was considered a god, a god of Egypt actually died.

This plague Yahweh used to humble Egypt for the cruel ways that they had treated His people. Egypt had enslaved Israel and had murdered their male children, but Yahweh, Ehyeh Asher Ehyeh, the One who has always existed, strikes back with an awful vengeance. His righteous anger was made known upon every house that was not covered with the blood. When the angel of the Lord saw the blood, he passed over.

In each of these plagues, Yahweh preserved His people. His scepter is both a staff of deliverance and a rod of correction. Only those who obeyed God by placing the blood upon the door were spared. Any Israelite who chose not to follow God's commands came under a curse of death, and any truly repentant Egyptian who would join themselves to the people of God would be spared.

Each one of us needs to pray to Yahweh that He expose the false gods in our lives. We must repent and come to our loving Heavenly Father for mercy and forgiveness. We need to recognize the atonement He has graciously provided and apply the sacrificial blood of Jesus to the doorposts of our hearts.

Idols Today

Some of us might say, "I have never worshipped an Idol in my life and I never plan to have more than one marriage partner." This may be so, but this does not mean that we do not have idols in our life. Anything can be an idol: Sports (cricket, football, skiing), husband, wife, girl friend, boy friend, television and money. Can you think of other things? **HERE'S THE IDOL TEST:** Think of those things in life that mean a great deal to you. If you were to lose this thing, would it destroy you? Does anything like a cricket match or a program on the TV makes you change your regular Sunday Services or give it a miss entirely? If your answer is yes, then that is an Idol in your life. Have your married outside the faith and this stops you from attending church services regularly and/or from baptizing your child? If your answer is yes, then this is an Idol in your life. **REMEMBER 1 JOHN 5:21.** Keep yourself from the false, empty and unreal gods because we have the **REAL AND TRUE GOD** (1 John 5:20)!

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