

BIBLE

PARALLEL

LINES

Pt. 8: Idols Revisited

Lev 19:4 *“Do not turn to idols or make metal gods for yourselves. I am the Lord your God.*

Sometimes I accidentally write something twice. I write a lot, it happens. Yet, I realized that I gave two slightly different views on Idols. So, here is a second look that is different than the first.

Where is the first idol in the Bible? I could make reference to rainbows, towers to the sky, or offerings. There are people who say that the Lord has made a pact to never again flood the earth; however, they will equally say that God won't kill, destroy, and judge because of this pact. In a way it gave these people a license to sin. God is all forgiving, right? I would suggest that they have made an idol out of a rainbow. Exodus 32:23-24 *“They said to me, ‘Make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, we don't know what has happened to him.’ 24 So I told them, ‘Whoever has any gold jewelry, take it off.’ Then they gave me the gold, and I threw it into the fire, and out came this calf!”* There have always been things we put our eyes on to replace God.

God gave Moses a staff that had the head of a snake on it. It's an odd symbol for God to use, yet He told the people to focus on the staff. Those who kept their eyes on this snake like staff lived. Years later this staff was being worshiped by those people. Some things like staffs and rainbows are given by God. Yet, we tend to take these things and make them our God. It's

the reverse: what God intended for good we use for evil. Why does God hate idols? Generally, the Bible does not describe the players within the Bible story. It's because we can follow an unseen God or a faceless Jesus but people want to worship the image of their God.

There are parallel lines in the Bible that warn us against idols. Why? It's plainly because we love to put things before God. In our last study I quoted God saying don't have any other Gods "before" him. That word "before" is important. We will spend money before we give to the church. We will eat breakfast before we pray. I will even say that someone will put themselves before serving others. It appears to be so human to put something (anything) before God. It's by no mistake that God mentions idols. Look at the parallel line towards Exodus 20: 4-5 *“You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. 5 You shall not bow down to them or worship them.”* God went overboard to describe anyplace and anywhere that we might make idols.

Look here in Joshua 6: 18-19 *“But keep away from the devoted things, so that you will not bring about your own destruction by taking any of them. Otherwise, you will make the camp of Israel liable to destruction and bring trouble on it. 19 All the silver and gold and the articles of bronze and iron are sacred to the Lord and must go into his treasury.”* A closer look will show you that there was a distinction between devoted (utensils used for other God's worship) and other metals like swords. The very next chapter finds a man named Achan who took some of the devoted things. It's interesting that he left the other spoils.

Jacob flees Uncle Laban but there is a curious verse in Genesis 31:30 *“Now you have gone off because you longed to return to your father's household. But why did you steal my gods?”* Someone had taken the Uncles Idols. Did Laban pursue Jacob for the return of his

daughters or his idols? Why did Rachel steal them? Even in God's chosen bloodline to Jesus were idol worship of other Gods.

Jesus is talking to the people in Matthew 6 about a great many things. He asks them to not store up treasures that don't matter. Look at verse 21 *"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."* This is it really. Idols take our eyes and heart off of God and on to other things. Things not of God. In verse 24 Jesus caps off His thoughts *"No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money."* The parallel lines are there to read. Jesus is warning about making idols of earthly treasures.

A last parallel line can be seen in Matthew 12:29 *"Or again, how can anyone enter a strong man's house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man? Then he can plunder his house."* It's the Parable of the divided kingdom. The verse above hits it on the head. The strong man is God. If we tie Him up or replace him then we could plunder His house. Equally, this parable goes on to say that the clean house will invite in demons because of the absence of God. Although it is not directly talking about idols the principle is glaring. Whatever we make our God will become our God. Tying up God means we chose to replace Him with something else.

In this generation, idol worship seems weird. Most people don't have a wooden object that they pray to. Yet, it's the little things. We take God out of School. Teachers create their own ideas on what is right and wrong. From tattoos to alcohol, people will adore many things that are not God. People don't worship tattoos? No? usually it's mantras that they live by. Symbols that they love and are inspired by. Are they godly? Does Gods word inspire them? As humans we are idol makers. Our human nature wants us to bind up the word and message of God so that we can

live by our own word and own rules. There is a very good reason why there are so many parallel lines in the Bible warning us about idols.