

What Is My Golden Statue?

Scripture Text: Daniel 3:1-7

Introduction

What is worship? It is acknowledging worth in something or someone. Worship is such a fundamental part of our lives. The church gathers to worship every Sunday; however, we should worship everyday and in everything we do. In fact, we worship someone or something whether we realize it or not. That is because we were *created* to worship. We will worship something, whether it is God or something else. There is a God-sized hole in every one's heart that must be filled. The truth is, though, only God can fill that hole. Yet, we spend much of our lives trying to fill it with everything but God. We intentionally worship other things. We even worship things not really realizing that we are doing so. Even when we think we are worshipping God, we may really be worshipping something else. For instance, even when you are singing songs of praise, you could be really worshipping something else, or someone else. How big of problem is it for us to worship anyone or anything other than God? Does God really care about this?

The Great Sin of Idolatry

The great irony, however, is this: God created man to worship Him, and man then creates idols for himself to worship. It is like getting a pet to love and to love you that runs off to be with another family. It does not fulfill its purpose. It is like an artist creating a wonderful masterpiece and someone else taking the credit. That is what idolatry is. It steals glory from the One who deserves it. Look at what Paul wrote about it in Romans.

Romans 1:22–25 ²² *Claiming to be wise, they became fools,* ²³ *and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.* ²⁴ *Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves,* ²⁵ *because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.*

Idolatry is trading the infinite worth of God for a worthless object. It was true in Paul's day and it is true for us today. In fact, men have worshipped other things than God since the beginning of time. That has been the great sin of all human beings throughout history. We have turned from the one, true God of heaven to lift ourselves up or to worship what we have created, rather than worship the One Who created us. Idolatry may be *the sin* God is most concerned with. It was so important to God, that He included it in the very first part of the Ten Commandments. Look at the following verses.

Exodus 20:3–5 ³ *You shall have no other gods before me.* ⁴ *You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.* ⁵ *You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the*

iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me...

We are not to worship anyone but God. Even the last commandment, you shall not covet, reinforces the first two commandments. Your greatest desire should be for God. God shall be your *only object of worship* and the *greatest desire of your heart*. Replacing God with other people or things to worship has been the great sin of mankind. This was certainly true for Nebuchadnezzar, who though he acknowledged God, only kept God at a distance and within his mishmash of religious objects.

Nebuchadnezzar's Golden Statue

Daniel had miraculously revealed a dream Nebuchadnezzar had and told him what the dream meant. That dream was of a large statue made of many different metals that represented different kingdoms throughout history. God was telling Nebuchadnezzar that there is a God in heaven who moves history, who holds the future in His hands, who raises kingdoms and puts them down, and who rules over an everlasting kingdom. In response to this, Nebuchadnezzar confessed Daniel's god as the "God of gods"; however, this did not mean that he was going to faithfully follow God. Nebuchadnezzar only acknowledged God as one of many gods to worship. He was just adding another "god" to his list. Even though God revealed Nebuchadnezzar's own brief existence through a dream of an enormous statue, Nebuchadnezzar proceeded to build a statue and commanded others to worship it. He basically thumbed his nose at God who just informed him that all earthly kingdoms are dust in the wind. Look at the following.

Daniel 3:1 *King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold, whose height was sixty cubits and its breadth six cubits. He set it up on the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon.*

Daniel does not tell us how many years had passed since Nebuchadnezzar's dream, but it probably took some time to build this statue. Given the position of this event right after Nebuchadnezzar's dream in the previous chapter, and the probability that the king got the idea for this golden statue from his dream, and the likelihood that the image was constructed to test the loyalty of his officials, it seems this was nearer the beginning of Nebuchadnezzar's reign. This statue of gold was ninety feet high and nine feet wide and reflected the enormous statue in his own dream. In his dream, the head was made of gold, which represented Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom of Babylon. The difference here was that Nebuchadnezzar's real statue was made entirely of gold. Nebuchadnezzar may have made the entire statue out of gold because of the golden head in his dream statue had represented him. He may have also made it entirely out of gold in order to defiantly say that there would be no other kingdoms after his. Nebuchadnezzar may have been foolishly saying, "God, you are wrong! My kingdom will last forever".

Once the statue of gold was built, Nebuchadnezzar then called many of his government officials out to worship this colossal statue. Like many people, the king was not content to worship his idol alone. He wanted others to join him. There could have been several

thousand people from all over the empire who stood before the statue awaiting orders. Maybe many of them knew what was about to happen. Maybe they had heard or experienced something similar to this and knew that the king was about to command them to worship this monstrosity. Look at the following verses.

Daniel 3:4-5 ⁴ And the herald proclaimed aloud, “You are commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages, ⁵ that when you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, you are to fall down and worship the golden image that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up.”

All of these government officials went to place of this statue and were commanded to fall down and worship the king’s golden statue, just as Nebuchadnezzar fell down before Daniel and gave him honor (Daniel 2:46). Except here, as with most worship services, there was music. Nebuchadnezzar had arranged the best available music from all over Babylon. This may not be surprising. Music moves us and can help us to worship. Sometimes, music can distract us from intentional, meaningful worship. People can fall into a trance, moving and listening to the musical sounds with little to no thought of what they are doing. Music should help us worship. Music should express our worship. Music should direct our hearts to the One we ought to worship. Music should not be *what* we worship. We have to be careful not to confuse the purpose of music.

Why would Nebuchadnezzar build this huge statue and order the people to worship it? Did he really believe it to be a god to worship? More likely, the statue was an image of a Babylonian god. As was mentioned earlier, Nebuchadnezzar may have called his officials to worship this statue as a way for Nebuchadnezzar to see how loyal they were to him and whether he could trust them. This may be why Nebuchadnezzar threatened those who did not worship the statue. See the following verses.

Daniel 3:6-7 ⁶ And whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace.” ⁷ Therefore, as soon as all the peoples heard the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, all the peoples, nations, and languages fell down and worshiped the golden image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

The people were forced to worship Nebuchadnezzar’s statue. Therefore, the people’s worship of this statue was largely motivated by fear. This brings another concept which we will explore more next week: who do we fear most? Do we fear the evil commands and threats of a corrupt government, or do we fear the eternal consequences of defying the God of heaven? How does fear motivate our worship? Either way, we have to be careful that not only is the object of our worship correct, but that our motivation for worship is right. That is why it is important to prepare our hearts for worship.

What Are Our Golden Statues?

Most people do not fall down to worship a ninety foot statue today. Most people do not worship idols like the Babylonians and other ancient nations did. That does not mean

we do not worship idols, though. There might not be a huge colossal statue that we worship today, but there may be huge idols in our lives. There may be huge idols that draw our hearts away from the one true God in heaven. People worship a plethora of things. What are your golden statues? What are your idols? Consider the following:

- **People** — We can think of people more than we should. Like Nebuchadnezzar who fell down to worship Daniel, people can worship other people. People flock around others who do great work or have great success. We call them fans or fanatics. People follow athletes and sports teams religiously. Even Christians flock around certain preachers. There are even idols in our marriages. People will literally worship their spouses, placing them where only God should be.
- **Possessions** — This is probably an easy one, but you may not realize what these idols are. Is your home an idol? Is your car an idol? How about family heirlooms? Families will split apart because they care more for possessions than they do for one another. They worship some artifact or trinket that belongs to someone they loved. Maybe it is a memory that is connected to a thing that motivates their idol worship.
- **Prettiness** — Go to mall or to any department store and look at the amount of products that are available to make us look more beautiful. We obsess with how we, or others, look. We even have to look a certain way before we meet for worship. Do you think God cares as much for your appearance as you do? Is your outward appearance more important to you than your inner appearance? Does your concern for outward beauty draw you away from true worship of God?
- **Profit** — People often care more about the “almighty dollar” than the Almighty God. Some call it “the good life”, having enough wealth to live comfortably or in excess of what they really need. People will want more wealth or more savings or more prosperity than they want more holiness or a closer relationship with God.
- **Popularity** — How much do you care about what other people think of you? Does fame or popularity, even a little bit, mean more to you than your faithfulness to God? Does being liked by other people mean more to you than being loved by God?
- **Position/Power** — Is status or success important to you? Is control or authority more important to you than submission to Christ?
- **Past/Progress** — People worship the past, how things used to be, traditions, or the “good ole’ days”. This can manifest itself in more concern for progress than for contentment. We can worship a memory rather than the Savior who made it possible.
- **Pleasure** — People care about satisfying their own desires. They make idols out of things that are fun or entertaining to them. We can care more about our temporary pleasures than for the God who promises eternal pleasures with Him.

What do you spend your time, talent and treasure doing? That is a good indication of what is really important to you. It may be an indication of what you truly worship. One way to see what your idols are is to look at your bank account. What do you spend your money on? This goes for the whole church. What do we budget? What do we actually spend money doing? That is an indication of where our hearts are. We can even turn

the blessings of God into idols of worship. We can spend His blessings on self-indulgence, when we should use them to share the Gospel and to bless others.

Destroy Your Golden Statues

So, we have all of these idols that draw our attention and worship from God. What can we do about idol worship? We have a choice: we can choose to worship our Creator, or we can choose to worship the creation. Paul reminded us to flee from idolatry.

1 Corinthians 10:13–14 ¹³ *No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.* ¹⁴ *Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry.*

It is interesting that Paul uses a word “flee”, as if idolatry is a danger to us. Well, it is! It corrupts us. It destroys our relationship with God. The good news is that God has promised to provide a way of escape from the temptation of idol worship. We can flee from it and run to Him for safety. At the very end of John’s first letter, he gives a reminder and a command regarding idolatry. Look at the following verses.

1 John 5:20–21 ²⁰ *And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true; and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.* ²¹ *Little children, keep yourselves from idols.*

How do we flee from idols? How do we keep ourselves from them? First, we must know what our idols are. Do you know what steals your heart from God? Have you prayed for God to reveal it to you? Once you know what your golden statues are, then you can flee from them. You can begin to replace that God-size hole with the God of heaven who belongs there. Stay in prayer. Stay in His Word. Ask yourself whether what you are doing or desiring really pleases God. Ask yourself whether you really care more about this or that thing than you care about simply being in the presence of Jesus Christ. Intentionally direct your time, your talents and your treasures to God.

Conclusion

In conclusion, idol worship is a real problem. There may not be any ninety foot colossal statue that draw our worship from God. There are other things in our lives that draw our worship from God. There are other people and things that steal our hearts from the God of heaven, who alone deserves our worship. Therefore, flee anything that becomes more important to you than God Himself. Run into the arms of our living Father in heaven. This is good news. Thanks be to God. Amen!