

Putting God First

The first command God issued to His people through Moses was, "You shall have no other gods before Me" (Exodus 20:3). Many idols existed and continue to exist upon this earth. Paul stated that "there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth," but he concluded by declaring, "Yet for us there is one God" (1 Corinthians 8:5-6).

God's command became the battleground in the faith of Israel. They did poorly in this. The golden calf came early in their existence as a nation of people. All through the wanderings, they clung to their idols. Stephen would later state this fact, which would lead to his death, that " God turned away and gave them over to worship the host of heaven, as it is written in the book of the prophets: Did you bring to me slain beasts and sacrifices, during the forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel? You took up the tent of Moloch and the star of your god Rephan, the images that you made to worship; and I will send you into exile beyond Babylon " (Acts 7:42-43). Generation after generation forsook God and served their idols (Judges 2:11-13; Judges 3:7; Judges 10:6; 1 Kings 9:9; 1 Kings 16:31; 1 Kings 22:53; 2 Kings 10:18; 2 Kings 17:12; 2 Kings 17:15; 2 Chronicles 7:22; 2 Chronicles 24:18). God's people became so deranged at times they attempted the impossible of fearing the Lord and serving their own gods (2 Kings 17:35-41). Clearly, one cannot do this acceptably. Paul writes, "You cannot partake of the table of Lord and the table demons" (1 Corinthians 10:21). During His temptation, Jesus quoted from Deuteronomy saying: "...it is written, you shall worship the Lord your God and Him only shall you serve" (Matthew 4:10).

Many idols are idols of the heart. They are not idols in the classic sense, but they are indeed that which we serve in place of God. God ends up taking second place in the hearts of people. It is in this way that Paul could state that covetousness is idolatry (Colossians 3:5). Jesus spoke directly of this saying "No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon" (Matthew 6:24).

We each need to realize that God is God and that "I" am not God. God has authority because He is God. He is the creator, the sustainer, and will be the judge. God will show who is the only God and king when He brings each of us to give an account (2 Corinthians 5:10, Galatians 6:7-8). The Word of God is still the authority for life. Yes, it must be understood correctly and then applied correctly, but we will be held responsible for proper understanding and application of His will. We are commanded to not be unlearned but rather to understand what the will of God is (Ephesians 5:17).