

The Lie that – GOD IS WHATEVER WE WANT HIM TO BE *(that He thinks like we do)*

“Whether admitted or not, we are born to seek meaning, made to hunger for the spiritual; and behind those cravings is our search for God. Yes . . . we all hope for more.” Ps 42:1 & 63:1

I - FROM GOD TO IDOLS

- “I believe in God” is perhaps one of the most meaningless statements we can make today.” Basically means that we see ourselves in a full-length mirror.
- Karl Barth (Swiss Theologian) – “Only **two ways to attain a knowledge of God**: one is to **begin with man and reason upward**; the other is to **begin with God and accept His revelation to us**?”
- Idolatry (defined) is fashioning an idea of God according to our inclinations and preferences. It is to pare God down to “more manageable proportions.” Ps. 115:3-8 (Emphasis v8). Reasons for idolatry . . .
 - **Impatient with His silence** in this confused age. (Weary of “sin” issues – want an accepting deity committed to helping fulfill human potential)
 - Want a God **more tolerant, less demanding, less judgmental**. Doesn’t mess with the core of our lives.
 - Commitment to individualism – “My mind is my church.” Make a god “just right for me.” Any belief system is possible.
- We think God is like unto us (Ps. 50:21) We have set up idols in our hearts and stumbling blocks before their faces (Ezek. 14:2-3). “The human mind is an idol factory!” – Calvin
- Impact: “Our ideas of God affect the way we think, the way we worship, and the way we live.”

II – IDOLS FOR DESTRUCTION

- Ideas of God beginning with man, “from the bottom up,” ANYTHING is possible.
 - God of “Health & Wealth”
 - We (in the west) are preoccupied with success, money, leisure.
Matt 8:20 & Phil 4:11
 - God of “My Emotional Need”
 - Sin is redefined as a lack of self-esteem. Gone is the idea that the knowledge of God is our greatest goal.
 - God exists to give me the unconditional acceptance I deserve. He’s to affirm who I am. Great need is not repentance, but to be comfortable with my true and unique personality.

- His promise is that He will be with us, not that our lives will be free from distress. How can we reduce God to a recipe for emotional tranquility in light of Jesus' words: **Matt. 10:34-36**.
 - God of "My personal Self-Authentication"
 - YOUR will for you is God's will for you.
 - This god defines no sin, no reproof, no judgment. There is no right and wrong. Word "evil" is emptied of all meaning.
 - This god has been thoroughly domesticated; we keep cows for milk, sheep for wool, and god to give us continual affirmation and acceptance.
 - Scripture reading: **Isaiah 5:20-21**
- Ideas of God "from man upward" disregard any claims for truth. The God you construct might be entirely different from mine. Twenty years ago it was said: "If it feels good, DO it." Today, it is "If it feels good, BELIEVE it."

III – THE GOD WHO HIDES & SEEKS

- "I AM WHO I AM" (Exod. 3:14). Today's paraphrase . . . "I am who I am and not who you want Me to be."
- God is countercultural – being thoroughly biblical is to be controversial. It's also to be confronted with a God who will not leave us as He finds us.
- Our great challenge is, as best we can, to "think His thoughts after Him."
- We are created in the image of God, but not in His *exact* image.
 - I Cor. 13:12 "Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known."
 - "Bring me a worm who can understand a man and I will bring you a man who can understand the triune God." (A worm might be to smart!) **Job 11:7-9**
- **THE GOD WHO HIDES** (Isaiah 57:15)
 - An Idol fills "the space" it takes up. God fills the heavens.
 - "Wetness is intrinsic to water, light is intrinsic to the sun, and holiness is intrinsic to God. No matter how we try to imagine God, we always fall short."
 - "Thankfully, because of His initiative we can move beyond speculation to personal knowledge. For this God has spoken, and He has not stuttered."
- **THE GOD WHO SEEKS**
 - II Chron 16:9 "For the eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to Him."
 - Isaiah 66:2b "This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word."

- **What has gone wrong in our world . . . “Without the knowledge of God there is no knowledge of self.”** With the loss of the biblical God has come the loss of sin; with the loss of sin comes the loss of a yardstick for behavior. With this loss comes the breakdown of society.
 - Only a God who judges us can save us. Idols do not judge us, and they cannot redeem us.

IV – BEGINNING OUR JOURNEY

- Hebrews 11:6 & James 4:8

- It is hopeless to “begin with man and reason upward,” the wisest course is to begin with God and accept His revelation to us.
- We must have a love for God that drives us to seek Him in “the darkness of incomprehensibility, leaving behind other attractions and desires.” God and God alone can fully satisfy the hunger and longing of our spirit.
- Only people who see God at a distance think they know everything about Him. But the closer we get to God, the more we are amazed at our ignorance.
- On the edges of Christianity are some sour apples – conviction of sin, self-denial, and purity – that keep off the hypocrites and mere religionists. But in the middle of the orchard are delicious fruits. The nearer to God we draw, the sweeter the joy. Our raging thirst for God can be satisfied.