



By: Elder Sean

Idols  
and  
Scriptural Idolatry

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**Published by Elder Sean**

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In this Bible Study we will be looking at exactly what an Idol is according to the Bible and Yahweh God, allowing readers to decide if they have become Biblical idolaters. **This Bible Study article will be long**, as we will be looking at not just Biblical verses but the meanings of the Hebrew words used in those verses to represent the English words for **Idol, Image and Worship, bowing down or serving (them)**.

References to the words “**Image**” and “**Idol**” are interchangeable with each other in this Bible Study due to the original Hebrew meanings which are discussed at the beginning, showing that they mean the same where Yahweh was and is concerned in relation to the Bible’s information.

Let us first look at the Hebrew words for Image and Idols from Strong’s

concordance, the **Strong's Hebrew Dictionary**. The words used in the Bible, especially the original Hebrew words from the Old Testament have a direct impact on ones understanding of what Yahweh God was informing us of:

There are 2 Hebrew words used to represent idols / images in the Old Testament, these are the words and their English meanings:

**Strong's Number: 5566**

סִמֵּל

**Transliterated:** cemel

**Phonetic:** seh'-mel

**Text:** or cemel {say'-mel}; **root meaning to resemble; a likeness: – figure, idol, image.**

**Strong's Number: 6091**

עֵצָב

**Transliterated:** `atsab

**Phonetic:** aw-tsawb'

**Text:** from 6087; **an (idolatrous) image: –idol, image.**

Now let us first look at what Yahweh has told us about Idols / Images:

**NJB Exodus 20:4-6**

**4. You shall not make yourself a carved image or any likeness of anything in heaven above or on earth beneath or in the waters under the earth.**

**5. You shall not bow down to them or serve them. For I, Yahweh your God, am a jealous God** and I punish a parent's fault in the children, the grandchildren, and the great-grandchildren among those who hate me;

**6. but I act with faithful love towards thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.**

The following is taken from the **10**

**Commandments.** Notice that it states quite specifically that we are to make **NO CARVED IMAGE OR ANY LIKENESS OF ANYTHING**. Again in Deuteronomy we can see the same thing listed where the **10 Commandments** are set out once again for us:

**NJB Deuteronomy 5:8-10**

- 8. `You must not make yourselves any image or any likeness of anything in heaven above or on earth beneath or in the waters under the earth;**
- 9. you must not bow down to these gods or serve them. For I, Yahweh your God, am a jealous God** and I punish the parents' fault in the children, the grandchildren and the great-grandchildren, among those who hate me;
- 10. but I show faithful love to**



thousands, to those who love me and keep my commandments.

Again Yahweh tells us not to make any images / idols of anything. With this information in black and white, directly from Yahweh God, it is hard to think that anybody could say that it was ok to have images or idols of anything at all no matter what the idea of them. It is quite clear that Yahweh tells us **NOT** to make images / idols in the **LIKENESS of ANYTHING** in Heaven or on Earth. Let us look at another couple of verses from the Bible in respect to images / idols.

**NJB Deuteronomy 4:14-20**

**14.** Yahweh then ordered me to teach you the laws and customs that you were to observe in the country into which you are about to cross, to take possession of it.

**15.** `Hence, be very careful what you do. Since you saw no shape that day at Horeb when Yahweh spoke to you from the heart of the fire,

**16.** see that you do not corrupt yourselves by making an image in the shape of anything whatever: be it statue of man or of woman,

**17.** or of any animal on the earth, or of any bird that flies in the heavens,

**18.** or of any reptile that crawls on the ground, or of any fish in the waters under the earth.

**19.** When you raise your eyes to heaven, when you see the sun, the moon, the stars, the entire array of heaven, do not be tempted to worship them and serve them. Yahweh your

God has allotted these to all the other peoples under heaven,

**20.** but Yahweh has chosen you, bringing you out of the iron-foundry, Egypt, to be his own people, his own people as you still are today.

Note specifically Moses' commands from verses 15 and 16 which states quite specifically:

**“Hence, be very careful what you do. Since you saw no shape that day at Horeb when Yahweh spoke to you from the heart of the fire, see that you do not corrupt yourselves by making an image in the shape of anything whatever: be it statue of man or of woman.”**

If God has commanded us, through Moses **NOT TO CORRUPT** ourselves by making images of **ANYTHING**, is it not the same as corrupting ourselves

by owning one of these images also?

**NJB Deuteronomy 4:23-24**

**23. Be careful not to forget the covenant which Yahweh your God has made with you, by sculpting an image or making a statue of anything,** since

Yahweh your God has forbidden this;

**24.** for Yahweh your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.

Again Moses tells us about Images / Idols, and how wrong it is for us to make them or have them. Yet do people listen to our Father in Heaven's command regarding this? No! They continue to make and acquire images and Idols, things that are an abomination to God and what's worse is that some even kneel before these images.

It should be noted at this time that kneeling before them is classified as

praying to them. From Strong's Hebrew Dictionary kneeling or worshipping incorporates the following meanings:

**Strong's Number:** 7812

שָׁחָה

**Transliterated:** shachah

**Phonetic:** shaw-khaw'

**Text:** a primitive root; **to depress, i.e. prostrate (especially reflexive, in homage to royalty or God): –bow (self) down, crouch, fall down (flat), humbly beseech, do (make) obeisance, do reverence, make to stoop, worship.**

Some Churches even make images and idols of Mary, Jesus' mother and of the Saints, and kneel before them as well.

Some Churches, in fact many churches and their congregations also have images of Crosses made, the torture implements used by

Satan and those that tortured and murdered our Lord and Saviour, Christ Jesus. Just how disgusting is it that people would willingly wear or own an image of the torture implement that inflicted so much pain on the one person they claim they love?

Some say that they use their images of Jesus or others etc. as we would use a picture of somebody we love. Firstly, it is irrelevant, as Yahweh tells us to not have any images of any kind, (faith in him is enough). Secondly, most of the images of the Saints and especially of Jesus are not even Jesus or even a close likeness of him, they are purely wrong and frauds, a quick look at most of the Catholic and most other Church's images of Jesus for example is enough to prove this point as many of the images / idols of him show

him with long hair. This in itself goes against Yahweh's command to the Hebrews / Jews, so Jesus would have had short hair not long. This can be seen in the following Biblical Verses:

### **For Priests of Yahweh.**

#### **NJB Ezekiel 44:20**

**20.** They may neither shave their heads **nor let their hair grow long**, but must cut their hair carefully

#### **NJB Psalms 68:20-21**

**20.** This God of ours is a God who saves;  
from Lord Yahweh comes  
escape from death;

**21.** but **God smashes the head of his enemies,**  
**the long-haired skull of the prowling criminal.**

#### **NJB 1 Corinthians 11:14-15**

**14.** Does not nature itself teach you that **if a man has**

**long hair, it is a disgrace to him,**

**15.** but when a woman has long hair, it is her glory? After all, her hair was given to her to be a covering.

Thirdly, many people kneel before these images / idols when they pray, which is also against Yahweh's commands.

Jesus said the following about worshipping Yahweh God:

**NJB John 4:23,24**

**23.** But the hour is coming, indeed is already here, **when true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth:** that is the kind of worshipper the Father seeks.

**24. God is spirit, and those who worship must worship in spirit and truth.**

If you have Images or idols, then you



are breaking Yahweh's Commands to us, therefore you are not worshipping him as Christ Jesus commanded us to worship him in **John 4:23 and 24**, you are not worshipping Our Father in Heaven in Spirit and Truth, but you are worshipping an Idol or image which is not Truth. You are not even showing your faith in him, because if you did have faith in him, you would not need an images, or the images of your Church.

I would like to add some of the following information from Elwell's Evangelical Dictionary which will give you an even better understanding of the historical nature of images and idols.

### **Idolatry**

The worship of an idol or of a deity represented by an idol, usually as an image.

Idolatry, as a form of religious practice, was common in both OT and NT times. Literary and archaeological evidence for the practice has survived from Mesopotamia, Syria-Palestine, Egypt, and from the Roman Empire.

One of the most distinctive features of Hebrew religion during the OT period was the absence of idolatry. Its practice was prohibited among the Hebrews, and the archaeological evidence indicates that the prohibition was observed for the most part.

There were **two prevalent forms of idolatry** in OT times, both banned by the Decalogue:

(1) **The first commandment**

prohibited the Israelites from worshiping any other god than the Lord (Exod. 20:3), thereby eliminating the false forms of idolatrous religion practiced in neighboring nations.

(2) The second commandment forbade the worship of the God of Israel in the form of an image or idol (Exod. 20:4-6).

Of the two prohibitions, the latter was crucial to the integrity of Israel's theology.

To worship God in the form of an idol would be to reduce God the Creator to the substance of creation (*that which was represented in the idol*), thereby undermining fundamentally the conception of the transcendent creator God. The idol gave to devotees a sense of the

**physical proximity of a deity and perhaps also the conviction that the deity's power could be harnessed by human beings.** The God of Israel was immanent, but that immanence could not be expressed in physical or tangible form; it remained the essence of faith and of experience.

**Despite the prohibition of idolatry in Hebrew law, it clearly remained a fundamental form of temptation throughout Israel's history, whether in worshiping false gods through their idols or in reducing the worship of the one true God to idolatrous form.** Hence, the denunciation of idolatry in its various forms is a recurrent theme in both

the law and the prophets (Deut. 7:25-26; 29:16-17; Isa. 40:18-23).

In NT times idolatry was practiced in various forms throughout the Roman empire and was steadfastly resisted by the early Christian church. It was understood as a sign of human folly (Rom. 1:22-23), representing a perversion of true religion. More frequently, however, the NT writers used the concept of idolatry in a metaphorical sense, particularly **with respect to covetousness (Eph. 5:5, Col. 3:5); covetousness is an “idol” by virtue of becoming the immediate focus of a person’s desires and “worship,” displacing the worship of God.** In the later history of

Christianity, idolatry in the strict sense has continued to be opposed in the terms of the ancient biblical prohibitions. But the continuing danger has more commonly returned in the metaphorical sense delineated in the NT; it is the “worship” (i.e., the total dedication of a person) of that which is seen and tangible, the goals of covetousness, rather than the unseen spiritual being that is God. *P. C. CRAIGIE*

*Bibliography:*

*O. Barfield, Saving the Appearances: A Study of Idolatry;*

*P. C. Craigie, The Book of Deuteronomy;*

*R. de Vaux, Ancient Israel.*

The above information outlines far better than any I can think of outside of Biblical Scripture about the dangers and errors of Images, Statues or other forms of Idols in the

worship, or focus of worship of Yahweh God.

There are many other verses regarding Idols and images in the Bible, however I see no need to go any further in regard to this bible study with them, the evidence and the Truth of the matter is mentioned just in the few verses already mentioned in this Article, with further clarifying information based on the information produced in Elwell's Dictionary. Yahweh tells us not to make Idols / images of **ANYTHING**, no matter what it is or where it is, if you have anything, a picture or statue of Jesus, of Mary or any of the Saints, of a cross or your church has any of these things, then by Biblical Judgment alone you and your church is breaking the commands of Yahweh God by having Idols.

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