

Australian Idols

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[0 : 00] I want to talk tonight about Australian idols.

Australian idols. Psalm 96 verse 5 it says, For all the gods of the nations are idols, but the Lord made the heavens.

All the gods of the nations are idols. This is not a feel-good message tonight. It's not a feel-good message or an ear-tickling message as was talked about.

I'm not talking against Baal. Ashtoreth and Molech today. I'm talking about Australian idols. Aussie idols.

The idols of our day. The idols of our nation. The idols of our homes. God forbid. Australian idols. What are they?

[1 : 06] What does it mean? And what should we do about them? Ezekiel 14 verse 6, The prophet said, The Lord God says, Turn from your idols.

Turn from your abominations. Turn your faces away from them. Idolatry. What is it? Idolatry. You look at the dictionary definition and we see it's really transferring worship to something other than God.

God. That's the bottom line of it. It's settling for shadows really. It's sort of the reality. It's settling for a substitute. It's a picture of a God.

A shadow. As we fashion a God. Small g. As he would be one that would be convenient. We fashion a God after our own making. An image of it.

Not a reality. But an imagined God. A representation. Always less than God. Always other than God. An idol. The word says, it declares to us, You shall have no other gods before me.

[2 : 22] No other gods. Idolatry transfers the honour that's due unto the Lord, unto something other than the Lord. A giving of our honour to some other object.

To some other thing. That takes the place that only God deserves. That's idolatry. When we worship something other than God, we are guilty of idolatry.

Now even in our world today, as people who still, sadly, bow down to manufactured images and idols and statues, conjured up with hand or tool of brass, of stone, of wood, I'm told there's churches with very historic idols in them and they have security guards watching them in case someone walks off with them and yet they bow down and virtually worship them.

What kind of God is that that needs a security guard to make sure he doesn't get stolen or seen? It could be anything, even religious things for our day though too.

Even the way we do church or our tradition can become an idol for us and whatever it might be in our lives could be all manner of things that we might manufacture that takes God's due place in our lives and anything that can become more important than God, it becomes an idol for us.

[3 : 48] Do you have idols in your life? It's a question we all need to answer. It should be obvious when something that captures our attention, that draws our thoughts and occupies our minds, that consumes our energies, our investment of time, of effort, of money, that consumes us, that can be an idol for us if it's something more important than God.

It's not that you necessarily bow down to some carved image that you venerate, but it could be an idol of a different sort in your life.

And 2 Corinthians chapter 6, verses 16 to 18. 2 Corinthians chapter 6, verses 16 to 18 tells us further what the Lord says about idols and his people and their relation to them.

2 Corinthians chapter 6, verse 16, and the context there is of separation. And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God.

As God hath said, I will dwell in them and walk in them and I will be their God and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing and I will receive you and will be a father unto you and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

[5 : 31] What agreement hath the temple of the living God with idols? What are the Australian idols? What are the Australian idols? What are the gods of our nation?

Talking about small g God, counterfeit gods, substitute gods, false gods. I'll put it to you, there's many. There's many. We'll look at some in due course and it's things really that people trust besides God, other than God, instead of God.

Put away the gods your father served. We need to take stock and not follow the crowd, not follow those that our forefathers might have served if they are false gods.

And we need discernment today. Back in church history, when God's people were revived, they smashed the idols. They smashed the idols.

Even in the churches, the idols of Mary and of Joseph and of Jesus, idols were smashed. Smashed images. Because the Bible says not to make out any graven image, even of such things as that.

[6 : 39] It's taking away his place when we venerate an image. As much as some well-meaning souls do, seek to do that, we know the Bible forbids us to do such.

And so, confront the idols in your life, whatever they be, and smash them to smithereens tonight. Smash them to smithereens.

The idols, God's covenant with man is for our exclusive worship of him. He is, as it says in Exodus 20, verse 5, a jealous God.

Jealous. I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God. The word jealous is a very strong word. It means a passionate, burning love. God doesn't want to share you with some other object or thing.

And yet, back in church history, back in Bible history, in Exodus 32, God blessed the people of Israel with many signs and wonders and redemption as they crossed the Red Sea to safety.

[7 : 45] Then Moses was in the mount and received the Ten Commandments and God's face-to-face instruction as it were. Aaron was down at the bottom of the mountain and it says there in Exodus 32 from verse 4, he fashioned an image for the children of Israel.

What a dork that Aaron was that he would fashion an image that would become an object of worship for the children of Israel when God had delivered them so wondrously and he says to them as he made this molten calf, they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.

And when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it and Aaron made proclamation and said, Tomorrow is a feast to the Lord. He said, It's a feast to Jehovah as it were and yet he had a molten calf that the people bowed down to and were dancing and jiving away to.

Messing with idols happened way back and we see it right back at Genesis through to the end and we see it in the contemporary days we write.

Messing with idols is dangerous and idols provoke the wrath of God. God is angry. God is jealous with idolatry and he wants you to be rid of it.

[9 : 13] He says, I will dwell in them and walk in them and I will be their God and they shall be my people. What agreement have the temple of God with idols? The Lord wants you to have no other gods before him.

In 1 Corinthians 5 it says, We're not to keep company with a brother who's a fornicator, covetous or an idolater, a railer or a fighting person or a drunkard or an extortioner with such and one know not to eat.

So, it's very serious when Christians mess and play with idols, idolatry. And there is a problem of idolatry tonight, today, in the world we live in, in the nation of Australia, the 21st century Australia, there's a worship of idols.

And Australia is guilty of the sin of idol worship. Really, it's the worship of other gods. And idols need to be destroyed. The Lord told Gideon in Judges 6, Throw down the altar of Baal.

Now, we don't have too many altars of Baal around planet Earth today, as it were, but there's plenty of altars to other gods. Plenty of altars to be removed. And in 1 Kings 15, 11, there's an account there of Asa.

[10 : 30] Asa did what was right in the eyes of the Lord and he took away the Sodomites out of the land and removed all the idols that his father had made. Even his mother's idol, it says, Asa destroyed her idol and burnt her.

We need to destroy the idols. Cast them down, the altars of Baal, smash the idols, destroy them. And God's servants through the Word of God are commended for their zeal against the idols.

Even in the New Testament in Acts 17, Paul was there in Athens and it says, His spirit was stirred in him when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry.

His spirit was stirred within him when he saw the city was wholly given to idolatry. Paul got stirred up when he saw the idols of Athens.

It says in verse 17 then, it goes on that he disputed in the synagogue and with the devout persons in the market daily. He reasoned with them, he exhorted them and idols were all about him.

[11 : 41] And friends, there's idols in the land all about us tonight. We ought to get stirred up about it. We ought to get stirred up about Australia's idols, Australian idols and yet our nation has this all-consuming love for idols it would seem and I'll explain that shortly.

Our spirits should be stirred up. Christians tonight, we should be stirred up when we see the city, when we see the nation, we see the idol worship and the word says strongly to God's people, little children keep yourselves from idols.

It's very clear and idolatry it's not just as I say venerating a statue, a carving or a painting. It happens when, as I say, boiling it all down to it, when you value something more than God.

It's what you place value upon, it's what you place that worship upon. Idolatry can be external in an outward display to a graven image but it can be internal, internal where in our heart some other thing takes his place.

is he number one, is Christ centred, living, the living that you're living or is it other than that? A man called Ryle said, the cause of all idolatry is the natural corruption of man's heart.

[13 : 10] It starts in the heart and we know in Ezekiel it talks about idols in the heart. So friends, the worship of idols, Australian idols. What am I on about tonight?

What do you mean? Australian idols. Put it to you, there's a number of them and we could list numbers of them but just to narrow it down to some. Firstly, self-worship.

Self-worship. People can be guilty of making a God in their own image, remaking God to suit themselves, a designer God, a custom-made God, a tailor-made God, a God to suit yourself.

Wouldn't that be nice? To have a God to suit yourself that you can manufacture just which parts you can listen to or which parts you don't have to take heed of.

That's what some people do today with the Bible. That's what some people do. They make a great God of self, of me, myself, and I. Self-worship.

[14 : 10] It started way back in Genesis, we see in the Garden of Eden. When Satan tempted and said, you shall be as gods, you shall be as God. And we see it today as Aussies have that insatiable selfish desire, the selfish desires to eat, to drink, to medicate more and more, to not resist the curbing of appetite, to make ourselves the God of our lives.

And self-worship, it's abundant today in Australia. Self-worship, we see pride, ego, we see where people want to be the master of their own destiny. That's Australia today, that's an Australian idol, self-worship.

As some would say, believe in yourself, believe in yourself, follow your heart. Yet the Bible says our heart is desperately wicked.

Who can know it? Don't follow your heart, follow the word. Let the Lord transform your heart and put the desires that are righteous within your heart. And then that will be a good thing.

Not following your selfish heart, but believing in Christ, not yourself. Self-worship is ultimately a rebellion against the Lord. Because truly for God's people, you're no longer your own.

[15 : 24] You are bought with a price. You are God's property. You are God's property. You don't belong to yourself anymore. Dennis, you don't belong to Dennis anymore. You are God's property. You are his possession.

And idolatry is disobeying God. It's when we're putting ourselves in the position of God. As it says in 1 Samuel 15, 23, rebellion is idolatry.

Think of self-worship. See that in 1 John 2. For example, love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life is not of the Father, but is of the world.

And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof, but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever.

Those lusts, those desires, those selfish, carnal desires, that pride of life, it's self-worship, self-worship, fight the flesh, surrender to the Lord.

[16:40] We need to get self off the altar, being praised, but put self on the altar as a living sacrifice. Don't worship self, but surrender self, yield self to him.

Australian idol, self-worship, one. Secondly, hero worship, hero worship is another Australian idol. When you see today, modern day idols, you know, they call them that on the TV programs, modern day idols, whether celebrities of song, of sport, pop stars, athletes, sport teams, they can become Australian idols.

You see the world go berserk, the nation going berserk, over kicking a ball around a piece of grass, and it's as if everybody stops with a hush, with an awe, with a reverence, or with an ecstasy of the occasion.

There's a fascination with heroes, with the stars of Hollywood. It can become an obsession for some. Hero worship. You know, they see the supermarkets with the faces plastered all over their magazines.

Hero worship. You've got to hear the latest gossip, the latest news about these heroes of the world, the heroes of our nation.

[18:03] And when heroes fall, people get devastated. Look at the devastation that happened when Lady Di was gone. And hero worship, the world was in mourning.

Why? She's just another human being, as much as she may have good qualities and bad, just as any can, man. But there was no reason for us to bow down and virtually worship her.

I know of a lady stepped into her home one day and the place was a virtual shrine to Elvis Presley. On every wall it was as if there was a picture of him or something that she went down to Memphis and she got something that was actually his.

It was as if she worshipped it as a relic, as a veneration object within a home and it was a virtual altar to this man, Elvis Presley.

Hero worship. That can happen for you and for me. And people bow down and worship heroes. It could be as you may be one of these people who would bow down before the images displayed on your laptop screen or on the plasma TV screen.

[19:20] As you bow down as it were and are worshipping the heroes of the screen. Or maybe are mesmerised by the latest MP3 music that moves you.

Hero worship Australian idols. It's real. And some Christians can actually worship TV preachers as well, not questioning what they say. They're my hero.

Nothing could be wrong with what they say. But even TV preachers, even this preacher, we need to be wary and discerning, not taking everything in without questioning it.

Does it line up? Does it add up? We must do. We are urged to. Think of the early church days. In the early church the believers were forced to make a decision between who they would worship, whether they would come before the authorities and bow down and throw some incense upon the altar to Caesar and make the declaration, Caesar is Lord.

Or whether they would say no. Jesus Christ is the Lord. It was a choice between those two in those days.

[20:36] And to not say Caesar is Lord meant the death penalty. Hero worship, and yet today we're guilty of it. Sadly, our nation is guilty of it, they would not say Caesar is Lord, even on the pains of death.

Too many Aussies have an immoderate attraction and a preoccupation, a devotion to entertainment, self-worship, hero worship. Another one, pleasure worship.

Pleasure worship, the word tells us of that. It tells us of a day coming, and I believe it's in the present, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God. The Bible urges us to be cautious, to be warned of some time.

Aussies, Australian idols, lovers of pleasure, pleasure worship. Today you've got Aussies who are beer worshipers, sports worshipers, sun worshipers.

They live to eat and drink. The sports events and venues become a kind of shrine, a kind of church, a worship event. An atmosphere built, the emotion is charged, the devotion is present.

[21:48] As people virtually are worshipping, as some sporting events become a kind of religious euphoria, what amount of time and devotion do you spend?

The question for all of us, do you give in turn, as it were, the God of sports? We all need to think of what we are about.

Aussies serve the pleasure God, a lust for more, a worship of luxury, of ease, of idleness. Now just to mention, I'm not against all pleasure.

We're not kill joys, as it were, for the sake of not having pleasure. There's nothing wrong with pleasure if it being in a godly vein. but we're talking about a preoccupation with the pleasure of the world.

Some will make an idol out of their lifestyle, out of designer labels, and the amount of time they spend in recreation, it's just all-consuming. Australian idols, I put it to you, a god of pleasure, as it were, is something that for some Christians, it takes away, it robs them of the time that they could be devoting to the word of the Lord.

[23 : 01] the work of the Lord, the vineyard work, time is taken for wasteful things. Pleasure worship, the altar, becomes the TV screen in some homes, as it were.

Not that there's anything wrong with a TV as such, but it's that preoccupation of it, the preoccupation, a devoting of more and more time. Whereas that time could be used more wisely. To seeking after truth and wisdom. Pleasure that involves disobedience to the word of God is an idol. And remember, an idol is anything that replaces the one true God.

So, idolatry, it's a match of the heart. Pride, self-centeredness, greed, a love for possessions for other things, ultimately a rebellion against God. Are you an idol worshipper?

Are you an idol worshipper? Worshipping self, heroes, pleasure, money. Money worshippers is another one.

[24 : 10] Our Lord says you cannot serve God and mammon or money. And Colossians 3, 5, it says that covetousness or greed is a kind of idolatry. And if we're not careful, for any of us, our houses, our possessions, what's in the bank account, it can become a temple of worship to the God of materialism.

You see, some swept along by that. In a way, you could in fact see, when you look at all those things I've mentioned, some churches are virtually worshipping all of these things.

You could see that in the modern church scene today. Think of it, self-worship, hero worship, pleasure worship, money worship. You see that in some churches, the preaching is all about making self feel good, self being successful, etc.

Hero worship, where they virtually make these preachers into gods that they do not question, where it's pleasure and success and making it in life that becomes the all consuming goal of our lives.

And money, that somehow Christians have to be wealthy, otherwise, they're not spiritual. And what a lie. It's an Australian idol. And seeing it, sadly, this idolatry, even in the church scene.

[25 : 30] And yet the love of money is the root of all evil. In 1 Timothy 6.10. So friends, think of it now as we wrap up. Some Aussies are guilty of idol worship.

And we as Christians do. We as Christians can be influenced by that mentality, that mindset that drives our world, that obsesses our nation.

Some Aussies worship at the altar of materialism, whether it's cash or cars, wanting more stuff. Yet the more and more they get, the less and less satisfied they are of what they have.

It doesn't satisfy, it doesn't fulfil. It's an idol. It's a substitute. It's a counterfeit for the reality of Christ. An obsession and greed for power, for success, for busyness.

Do we stop and think and ask ourselves, how could my time and effort, my devotion, how could it be better spent? What if our Lord was to come?

[26 : 32] How would he spend his money? How would he spend his time? How would he spend his energies? Now, the word says that we should repent of idols.

We should repent of idolatry as we read there in Ezekiel 14. Repent and turn yourselves from your idols. What if you don't?

What if you don't repent? Friends, there's judgment coming. And sadly, idol worshippers will be lost. You know, it's sorts of idolaters going to the lake of fire. Now, of course, we're talking in terms of idols of our time.

Not idols of statues of gold or silver or bronze. We're talking about the idols that preoccupy people today. Australian idols. That which takes his place, his rightful place.

[27 : 32] And friends, the Bible says we must repent. A man was once reading to a lady out of the Bible about sin and about those guilty of sin who did not repent.

And she responded, she said, oh, my God would never do that. My God would never do that. And he replied, ma'am, you're right. Lady, you're right tonight.

Your God would never do that. The problem is that your God doesn't exist except in your own mind. You have created a God after your own image, after your own imagination, according to your own liking, and now you have fallen down and worshipped him instead of the God of the Bible.

You have committed idolatry. It's a reality tonight. There's many that profess Christ. They don't know him. They're worshipping other things. He might have some token mention, some token place, but he's not centre stage.

He's not number one. He's not central. He's not the God of their lives. And will we turn away from our modern day idols? Or will we try to toy with God and idols? Friends, don't settle for anything else.

[28 : 45] Don't worship an idol. Worship the true and living God. 1 Corinthians 10, 14, it says, in part, flee from idolatry. Run from it.

Make yourself scarce from idolatry. Put a wide barge pole between you and that which is idolatry. And friends, consider it tonight. Talked about the idols of the nation, of the Australian idols of our time.

Self-worship. Don't put self on the altar, other than as a living sacrifice for his disposal. Yield it to him, but don't worship yourself. Hero worship.

He's the only hero. He's the only one worthy of our love and devotion in that special sense of our champion, our saviour, our lord, our master, our king.

He's the only hero that we should adore and be devoted to. Pleasure worship. What greater pleasure is there than at his right hand? There are pleasures forevermore.

[29 : 42] The true pleasure, the true joy is found in Christ that is abundant and eternal. The joy beyond compare, the joy beyond this life, the joy that is everlasting.

That is true pleasure. And money, that's just what we buy things with. It's not something to be consumed about. And friends, let's put it all in priority that he is the one adored.

He is the one devoted to. He is the one that we worship. Friends, be encouraged tonight. I urge you tonight, put those Australian idols down.

Cast them down. Smash those Australian idols in your life and repent. Put it away. Put it aside and cast them down. The altar to Baal, as it were, the altar to the idols of this time, of this nation.

And instead, lift up your heart unto the Lord. Let him be the one that you worship exclusively. So that jealous God who is worthy of all our love and all our devotion.

[30 : 46] Let us pray. I love to tell your story of haunting things above of Jesus and his glory.