

## **Look To God**

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During the presidential campaign, if you watched a Donald Trump rally when the camera panned the audience, you saw these worshipful looks on people's faces as they were just hanging on every word he said. They were just idolizing Donald Trump. Of course, on the other side of the campaign Hillary Clinton with her rallies and all; probably eighty or ninety percent were women. The fact is the same thing happened. They idolized her, feeling that as president she could do nothing wrong, in part because she's a woman and all, but they just idolized the woman. Today people idolize sports figures. They idolize entertainment individuals and you can see out in the audience; people just swooning almost. In my day, the girls just fainted when Elvis Presley played. You remember when the Beatles became famous and people just were in ecstasy, idolizing them. Other people idolize money or the things that money can buy.

On the religious side the Catholics worship, idolize the Pope as their father. They kiss his ring; kiss his feet; maybe not so much this Pope, but certainly previous Popes. In addition they worship Mary. They call her the mother of God and say she is a mediatrix between Christ and man. In the Catholic hierarchy, you go to Christ and you go to the Father. Well, you have Mary in between man and Christ, because she convinces her son that this person's pleas and prayers should be answered. Also, the Catholics worship the apostles; all of them and then they worship various saints, pray to them. In certain ways both Protestants and Catholics worship the building. These grand cathedrals, gigantic buildings, Saint Peter's Basilica and the like, are almost worshipped as the church itself.

In the Worldwide Church of God days, many people looked to Mr. Armstrong and in some cases probably too much. Obviously, we owe Mr. Armstrong a great debt of gratitude, because God used him to teach us the truth. We are very thankful for that, but it is a sin to worship Mr. Armstrong and yet that has happened.

In all of the examples I have given this far it is apparent that people, human beings want to look to other human beings or other things to solve their problems; to worship.

Let's give an example by way of introduction of Ancient Israel wanting to look to a man. Turn to 1 Samuel 8:1-2, a very familiar story. Samuel had been judging Israel for a great period of time and he was getting older.

**1 Samuel 8:1.** *And it came to pass, when Samuel was old, that he made his sons judges over Israel. (KJV)*

Now look at verses 3-17. Notice what happened.

*3) And his sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment.*

*4) Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together ... (KJV)*

It was in reaction to this, obviously.

*4b) ... and came to Samuel unto Ramah,*

*5) And said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations.*

*6) But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto the Lord.*

*7) And the Lord said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.*

*8) According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt even unto this day, wherewith they have forsaken me, and served other gods, so do they also unto thee. (KJV)*

Now, here's an important point. God says when we elevate a man or anything else for that matter before Him, or in place of Him, or in front of Him, He calls it serving other gods. God Almighty says this. So, the fact that Israel wanted to elevate a man; He is saying they are rejecting Me. We need to learn a lesson from that, because by this example if we put anything before God Almighty, it's idolatry. It's serving other gods.

*9) Now therefore hearken unto their voice: howbeit yet protest solemnly unto them, and shew them the manner of the king that shall reign over them.*

*10) And Samuel told all the words of the Lord unto the people that asked of him a king.*

*11) And he said, This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you: He will take your sons, and appoint them for himself, for his chariots, and to be his horsemen; and some shall run before his chariots.*

*12) And he will appoint him captains over thousands, and captains over fifties; and will set them to ear [cultivate] his ground, and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war, and instruments of his chariots. (KJV)*

That's what he is going to do to your boys.

*13) And will take your daughters to be confectionaries ... (KJV)*

The Hebrew means a female perfumer.

*13b) ... and to be cooks, and to be bakers.*

*14) And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your oliveyards, even the best of them, and give them to his servants.*

*15) And he will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give to his officers, and to his servants.*

*16) And he will take your menservants, and your maidservants, and your goodliest young men, and your asses, and put them to his work.*

*17) He will take the tenth of your sheep: and ye shall be his servants. (KJV)*

I did a little research of what is happening in the United States today as far as serving those over us, or serving the government. Right now out of the three hundred and sixty five days a year it takes the average person one hundred and seven days to pay for all of the federal, state and local taxes. A hundred and seven days we work for the man above us. That's twenty-nine percent of our income. For our brothers up in Canada it's forty-two percent of their income of one hundred and fifty-three days. Then you go to Europe and it's eighty to ninety percent of the income. So, in this prophecy Samuel said if you put a government in place of God, this is what's going to happen to you and it certainly is. Look at verses 18-20.

*18) And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you ... (KJV)*

Notice God's reaction.

*18b) ... and the Lord will not hear you in that day. (KJV)*

I might add He's not hearing us today. People whine and complain that God's not listening. He says, "I told you so. This is what was going to happen." Despite all of this warning:

*19) Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, Nay; but we will have a king over us;*

*20) That we also may be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles. (KJV)*

“We are going to worship this king. We are going to look to this king instead of God Almighty.”

We have to stop here and ask the question: Where does the desire to worship a human being or to put a human being between us and God come from? Let’s go to Jeremiah 7:23-24. By the way, if you want a couple of verses that give you the crux of the Old Covenant, these are the ones. They summarize that covenant very, very well. God is saying this to us today by way of recounting what happened back then.

***Jeremiah 7:23.** But this thing commanded I them saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my [special] people: and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you.*

*24) But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear, but walked in the counsels and in the imagination of their evil heart, and went backward, and not forward. (KJV)*

Israel walked. Israel thought. Israel was motivated by an evil human heart. We call it today human nature. At the end of the day look what it got them.

In our lives today we must constantly, always be on guard against putting anything between us and God; worshipping a man, worshipping something that we can see with our eyes be it a human being, an institution, money, things money can buy, whatever. We have to constantly, as God’s people, be on guard against this. That leads to the subject of the message today; we need to look to God and not men, yet over and over starting with Ancient Israel up to this day in the modern day Church of God, people in the church struggle with this and have a hard time with this. You would think we would have learned the lessons but sadly we have not. The first point I would like to make is the obvious one and is the core of this.

## **1. Humans want to worship something they can see and not God.**

They want to worship something they can see with their eyes or get their hands on and not God Almighty, who we cannot see. Now after all of the miracles God did in bringing Israel out of Egypt and the fact that they had a pillar of fire and a pillar of a cloud, they heard God’s voice from the mountain and the mountain was shaking and the rocks were trembling, after all of that, you would think that they would reverence God, worship God, believe God, but they didn’t. Let’s go to Exodus 32:1-5 and see probably the most pregnant example of people wanting to worship something they can put their hands on or something they can see. Moses went up to the mountain. He didn’t come down fast enough to suit them and here’s what we have.

**Exodus 32:1.** *And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods [with your hands], which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt ... (KJV)*

What about God? What about the miracles? What about the parting of the Red Sea?

*1b) ... we wot not what is become of him.*

*2) And Aaron said unto them, Break off the golden earrings, which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them unto me.*

*3) And all the people brake off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them unto Aaron.*

*4) And he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. (KJV)*

This just blows your mind. These things didn't exist when they came out of Egypt. They weren't there, yet humanly they wanted to craft something, put it on a pedestal and worship it and make attributes attributable to this thing made out of metal.

*5) And when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation, and said, Tomorrow is a feast to the Lord. (KJV)*

My guess is Aaron was trying to get them back to God or to maybe be half right in this crazy endeavor. I will quote verse 6 out of the New Living Translation.

*6) The people got up early the next morning to sacrifice burnt offerings and peace offerings. After this, they celebrated with feasting and drinking, and they indulged in pagan revelry. (NLT)*

We have to remember that for over four hundred years they had been in Egypt which worshipped all manner of pagan gods, so they were used to this.

Adam Clark's Commentary says this:

When therefore the strictly religious part of these ceremonies was finished, the people sat down as idolaters, eating and drinking to excess. And it appears they went much further, for it is said they rose up to 'play', a word of ominous import,

which seems to imply here fornicating and adulterous intercourse, and in some countries the verb 'to play' is still used precisely in this sense.

Continue in verses 7-9.

*7) And the Lord said unto Moses, Go, get thee down; for thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves:*

*8) They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them: they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. (KJV)*

God isn't a human, but if a human was in God's place he would get mad. He would think how on earth after all that I've done for them can they do this? Obviously, God is far above that and it doesn't bother Him in that regard. He felt sorry for them, because they were going to have to pay a horrible penalty.

*9) And the Lord said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people: (KJV)*

That holds true for a tendency for all of us today. Continue in verses 15-24.

*15) And Moses turned, and went down from the mount, and the two tables of the testimony were in his hand: the tables were written on both their sides; on the one side and on the other were they written.*

*16) and the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables. (KJV)*

Can you imagine having these things, carrying them down the mountain and looking at the script and noting that they were probably written with the finger of God on this stone?

*17) And when Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted, he said unto Moses... (KJV)*

He was waiting part way up the mountain.

*17b) ... There is a noise of war in the camp.*

18) *And he said, It is not the voice of them that shout for mastery, neither is it the voice of them that cry for being overcome: but the noise of them that sing do I hear.*

19) *And it came to pass, as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf, and the dancing: and Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount.*

20) *And he took the calf which they had made, and burnt it in the fire, and ground it to powder, and strawed ... (KJV)*

The Hebrew for “strawed” means *to diffuse* or *to spread*.

20b) *... it upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink of it. (KJV)*

I never thought of it until this recent study. We know today, didn't know it back then, that drinking heavy metals is toxic. This is one of the reasons why everybody was dead in forty years, the males and the females were that over twenty years old.

21) *And Moses said unto Aaron, What did this people unto thee, that thou hast brought so great a sin upon them? (KJV)*

Aaron is obviously ashamed, trying to justify himself.

22) *And Aaron said, Let not the anger of my lord wax hot: thou knowest the people, that they are set on mischief.*

23) *For they said unto me, Make us gods, which shall go before us: ... (KJV)*

This is the desire. Put something in front of us that we can see and get our hands on and we'll worship it and we'll follow it. He says:

23b) *... for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him. (KJV)*

Obviously, in all of this the thing that's most astonishing is God Almighty is not in the picture. That's something that all of us need to be very careful about always, especially that they forgot what God did for them. We cannot forget what God does for us on a daily basis.

24) *And I said unto them, Whosoever hath any gold, let them break it off. So they gave it me: then I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf. (KJV)*

Poof, out comes this calf. He is trying to minimize his sins, which again is human nature.

We see here that the people wanted to look to something, worship something that was made by the hands of men. That is something that all of us have to be careful about. The overall problem with humanity is they want to worship, look to something they can see. Be it an idol or a man they want to worship something, look to something they can see and they don't want to worship God or something they cannot see. That leads us to the second point.

## **2. We need to be taught the right way, but we can't worship the man or the teacher that taught us.**

We all have to be taught the right way. In Jeremiah 10:23 it says:

***Jeremiah 10:23.** O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps. (KJV)*

Man doesn't know how to put one foot in front of another. We just don't have it in us, so therefore we need to be taught the right, the correct way. That's what happened when we were called. God called us. He threw the switch. Most of us came into contact with the Worldwide Church of God or the writings of Herbert Armstrong and things began to click. We began to understand things we hadn't understood before and from that time on we studied. In the current culture such a small percentage study only four times a week and that might be just reading one or two scriptures. The fact is over the years we study and we want to learn more about God and more about Christ. We are told in Hosea 6:6 that we are to grow in the knowledge of God.

***Hosea 6:6.** For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings. (KJV)*

It shows we are to grow in the knowledge of God. In 1 Peter 3:18 we are told to grow in the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

***1 Peter 3:18.** For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: (KJV)*

That should be a lifelong pursuit, a daily study to learn more about God and more about Christ. I remember an evangelist years ago told a good friend of mine, so I believe it's

true because he was an eye witness. He said, "You know I don't study much anymore, because I have been studying for close to forty years. I know all of the basics of the Bible and so I really don't need to study much anymore." Well Hosea 6:6 and 1 Peter 3:18 tell us that can't be. We need to study daily to learn more about God and Christ. The point is here we worship them; we don't worship the teacher who taught us. Let's go to Acts 8:26-35. This is the account of where a very bright, very smart, very accomplished man needed a teacher.

**Acts 8:26.** *And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert.*

*27) And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship, (KJV)*

The term "eunuch" was a general term that was given to those who served in court in many various capacities. Some of them were physical eunuchs and some were not. We don't know if this man was a physical eunuch, but he was called a eunuch because he served in her court and he had the tremendous responsibility of managing all of the finances of her kingdom. He was obviously a smart, accomplished, talented man.

Do you remember Luke's little words? I gave a sermon on that and how accurate he was in the little things he put in his writings that we can verify today. Let me read from a book called Bruce's Travels, Volume 2, and Page 431. James Bruce was a Scottish traveler and writer. He lived in the 1700s. He says, referring to the queen's kingdom:

It is known from credible writers that this Candace reigned upon the Nile in Atbara near Egypt. Her capital also was taken in the time of Augustus [Caesar] a few years before the conversation of the slave by Philip and we shall have occasion often to mention her successors and her kingdom. They existed when I passed through Atbara and do undoubtedly exist there to this day.

This is a confirmation of these little words that Luke wrote about this queen.

*28) and was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet.*

*29) Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot.*

*30) And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read [out loud] the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? (KJV)*

This very smart, very accomplished man said:

*31) And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him. (KJV)*

This very smart man is saying I need some help here to understand this. The Greek word for “guide” means literally *to show the way*. It means literally or figuratively *to teach* or *to lead*. The root from that means *a conductor*, as a conductor would conduct a symphony, to lead this entire group.

Frankly, that’s what Mr. Armstrong did for us. He showed us the way.

*32) The place of the scripture which he read was this ... (KJV)*

Now Luke quotes Isaiah 53:7.

*32b) ... He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth:*

*33) In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth.*

*34) And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee ... (KJV)*

He said I’m asking you. I’m praying to you. I’m beseeching you.

*34b) ... of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man?*

*35) Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. (KJV)*

Obviously, this man went back to Candace’s kingdom and he began talking to people about it. This was the way the good news was spread in those days. The fact is, you see, the apostles were taught directly by Jesus Christ. Paul was taught by Jesus Christ. Christ spoke directly to him in Acts 18. For those of us who were called in the late ‘50s, ‘60s, ‘70s and the early ‘80s Mr. Armstrong was our teacher. He was a human. He was not perfect, as we all aren’t, but he taught us much of the basics that we know today. Obviously, we owe him a debt of gratitude. The point is all that is taught must be according to God’s word. As we are going to see, Mr. Armstrong mentioned that on occasion. Let’s go to Acts 17:10-11. We covered this recently in a sermon. We’ll just hit the highlights here. Paul and Silas were sent away to Berea. They came there and first just went right to the synagogue and to preach to the Jews.

**Acts 17:10.** *And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews.*

*11) These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind ... (KJV)*

This means they had an open mind. They were ready to listen to what these men, Paul and Silas, were saying. Notice this.

*11b) ... and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so. (KJV)*

The scriptures they had were in the synagogue, so after Paul and Silas left or even maybe while they were doing it somebody would go get a scroll and unroll it and see if what they were saying was true. In essence they were saying, "This sounds correct but give us a little time to check it out." You see, God's word contains all of the answers as to what we must be doing, but we have to check God's word to make sure that what the teacher tells us is true. That's our obligation.

Remember, Mr. Armstrong said many times, dozens and dozens of times certainly over the radio, "Blow the dust off of your Bible and check it out and see if what I'm telling you is true." Back then in the '50s and '60s almost every home had a Bible, the family Bible, and it was sitting on a coffee table somewhere hardly got used. He said blow the dust off of it, see if what he said was true.

Also, we know that teachers can teach by example. Remember the old saying "your example is shouting so loud I can't hear what you're saying"? The example is very, very important. All of us teach by example whether we like to or not. I have had many good teachers over the years, ministers that helped me along the way and set a great example. One minister taught me by example how to relate to people, deal with people, especially in difficult situations.

The fact is we should honor and respect teachers that teach us the truth from Mr. Armstrong on down, but we should not worship them. You see, people have a tendency, as Ancient Israel did, to worship the teacher or to worship the institution from which the teacher comes. The fact is they want to worship the teacher, but not the author of what is taught. That's the mind-blowing thing, because the teacher is just taking information and passing it along, maybe in his own words or in his own approach. People want to worship the teacher, rather than the author of what was written and it blows the mind. That's happened even in the churches of God. There are people today. I have talked to several that don't read the Bible directly. They read whatever group they belong to, whatever literature that group publishes. If it quotes a scripture,

they turn to the Bible and look up the scripture and see, yes, well okay it's here. Then they go back to reading the booklet or correspondence course, or whatever it is rather than go to the Bible, study the Bible for what the Bible says. We see that quite a bit.

The point is people want to worship someone they can see or something they can see. We all need teachers, but it is God who opens our mind. Without God opening our mind all of the teaching in the world is fruitless. God is the one that opened our mind, so we need to give God the credit and not a human being. God gets the credit, not a man who taught us. The only credit that the teacher can take is yielding to God. That's all. God gets the credit.

### **3. We must always look to God because God is the one that called us.**

No human being called us; therefore no human being should be between us and God. God did the calling. Let's go to Acts 2:39. Sometimes we forget that God Almighty on His throne is the one that is making the call to us, each one individually

**Acts 2:39.** *For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. (KJV)*

Now let's go to 1 Corinthians 1:23-29. Paul is dealing with this dysfunctional church. Notice what he says.

**1 Corinthians 1:23.** *But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness;  
24) But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. (NKJV)*

Christ is both the power and the wisdom of the Father in heaven.

*25) Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men.*

*26) For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called:*

*27) But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty;*

*28) And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are:*

*29) That no flesh should glory in his presence. (KJV)*

So, God our Father is the one who called us into the church that bears His name, the Church of God. The Church of God is mentioned eight times in the New Testament. As a reminder let's go to James 2:5-7. Again, this is talking about being chosen to be in the very church of God Almighty.

**James 2:5.** *Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?*

6) *But ye have despised the poor. ... (KJV)*

He is getting on the people. They had a certain hypocrisy in that regard. They are judging the poor.

6b) *... Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats?*

7) *Do not they [the rich men] blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called? (KJV)*

That name is Church of God. Now let's go back to 1 Corinthians 15:9. Paul is saying here that he is the least of the apostles and he tells us why, because he persecuted a certain group of people.

**1 Corinthians 15:9.** *For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. (KJV)*

God called us and He put us into His church. Then what God did, as we are going to read some scriptures to show, once He called us into the church He turned us over to His son. Let's go to John 6:37-38. Christ is the head of the church and when God made the call, He turned us over to Jesus Christ, as we are going to see.

**John 6:37.** *All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.*

38) *For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him [the Father] that sent me. (KJV)*

Go forward to John 10:29. Christ says:

**John 10:29.** *My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. (KJV)*

We see here that rather than look to a man, a potentate in a church, as described earlier say in the Catholic Church, we need to look to God. In our case, God was the one that issued the call. God called us individually into His church with His name and then turned us over to Jesus Christ for looking after, taking care of us as head of the church. Ending this third point, we need to look to the one who called us and not to a man.

#### **4. Christ set the example of looking to the Father.**

Christ didn't look to a building. Christ didn't look to an institution. Christ didn't look back to the fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and worship them. You see, He introduced the people to the Father, now called the Father, because Christ is now the Son. Turn to John 17:3. Christ is praying. Notice what He says. He is saying don't look to a man.

**John 17:3.** *And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. (KJV)*

So, He is pointing the people to the Father. Notice John 14:28. He is walking the earth. He is God in the flesh, but notice His attitude.

**John 14:28.** *Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I. (KJV)*

He pointed the people to His Father. Go back to John 8:28.

**John 8:28.** *Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things. (KJV)*

Christ again was pointing the people to His Father and we know that He came to do His Father's will. Look at John 4:34. John was focusing on the fact that Christ was not calling attention to Himself, but He was calling attention to His Father. I'll quote this out of the New King James.

**John 4:34.** *Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work." (NKJV)*

It is very clear. As I said, He wasn't saying, I am here to do my own thing. I know best. I'm going to do whatever I want to do. He said, "I'm here to focus on the will of the one

who sent me. Then He taught us to pray to the Father. Let's go to Matthew 6:9-10, the model prayer. Again, the focus, Christ's example was looking to the Father.

**Matthew 6:9.** *After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.*

*10) Thy kingdom [the Kingdom of God] come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. (KJV)*

He is saying, "I am here to do my Father's will" and we should be praying that we should do the Father's will. So, it is all very clear. It all syncs together and Christ is telling us and setting us the example to look to His Father, the Father, and to never put anything between us and God Almighty. We can't do that. If we do that, that is idolatry and that leads us to the fifth and last point.

## **5. When we put something between us and God, we indeed commit idolatry.**

It can be a human. It could be an institution. It can be money. It can be things that money can buy. It can be anything that we put in our mind or how we exercise our mouth or our body between us and God. If we put anything there, it is idolatry. You see, today people want to worship something made by men, don't they? People want to worship a doctor who "saved them," almost idolize the doctor or the medical profession. Other people idolize a pill that they take and maybe it made them feel better for a period of time; that "saved" them. People idolize the TV preacher that "saved" them; send them money. You see these mega churches. I don't watch them, but you see about them in the [TV Guide](#) where there are these mega churches and they are preaching to thousands and thousands. People have these worshipful looks in their eyes about worshipping a man, looking to a man.

During the Worldwide Church of God days some people almost worshipped Mr. Armstrong and some still do today from the standpoint that there are some who say every word Mr. Armstrong said in a sermon or recorded or every word he wrote is the equivalent of scripture in the Bible. In other words, they are saying Mr. Armstrong's words, every one of them, was God breathed. We can't say that, because God hasn't said that. God said that in the Bible about what was written then and was written in the Old Testament, but God has never said every word by a man since that time is God breathed. Until God says that, we should not put it to that level. I'm not saying that, whether it's a minister today or Mr. Armstrong or somebody before him, they didn't preach the truth. We are all human beings. We are all imperfect and all of us make mistakes. You see, putting something before God was both noted and prophesied in the book of Revelation. Let's turn to Revelation 2:6, regarding the church at Ephesus.

God warned through Jesus Christ, through John about the doctrine of the Nicolaitans. Christ warned about it, told John twice.

***Revelation 2:6.*** *But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. (KJV)*

He was complimenting the church at Ephesus. Jamieson, Fausset and Brown's Commentary says this:

Nicolas (conqueror of the people) is the Greek of Balaam, destroyer of the people. Revelation abounds in duplicate Hebrew and Greek names: Apollyon, Abaddon; Devil, Satan.

All go back to the doctrine of Balaam. That's interesting. Going on in verses 12-15:

*12) And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges;*

*13) I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.*

*14) But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there [in their midst] them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. (KJV)*

This is just like the golden calf. They had people in their midst that were teaching this.

*15) So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate. (KJV)*

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown's Commentary goes on to talk about the doctrine of the Nicolaitans. Notice this:

They are not a sect, but professing Christians who, like Balaam of old, tried to introduce into the church a false freedom that is licentiousness.

It means this is not some group out there that's trying to come into the church. These are people already in the church. This was a reaction in the opposite direction from Judaism and the doctrine of the Pharisees, which is just strictly physical; touch this,

don't touch that, eat this, don't eat that. They added and added thousands of regulations and restrictions. This was a reaction in the opposite direction from Judaism, the first danger to the church combatted in the Council of Jerusalem by Paul in the epistle to the Galatians.

These Nicolaitans or followers of Balaam abused Paul's doctrine of the grace of God into a plea for lasciviousness, who both described the same sort of seducers as followers of Balaam.

Why in Revelation would God mention Balaam going back way into the Old Testament? What is His point? Why did He bring it up? I gave a sermon on that some time back, so we won't go through the story. You can find it in Numbers 22 through Numbers 24. Israel was marching north on the east side of the River Jordan and heading toward the Promised Land. The Moabites got scared, as we all would. If you had several million people marching into your territory, what are you going to think? They are going to wipe us out. That's what Balak, the king of the Moabites thought. He elicited the aid of the Midianites. They wanted to get together and they had to stop this mass of people coming their way. What they did is they sent for Balaam, who lived about five hundred miles to the east, but had this tremendous reputation as a sorcerer, somebody who could pronounce curses and have them come to pass. So, they sent emissaries to him and they wanted him to curse Israel. They offered money. They offered him position. He initially refused and later acquiesced. If you read the whole story, he wanted to curse Israel, but he could not because he feared God. God warned him by a talking donkey that you better not mess with Israel. When a donkey talks to you, you believe there's something going on here that maybe I ought to pay attention to. He refused Israel. He couldn't directly oppose Israel, God's people, because God protected them. Let's go to Numbers 25:1-3 and see if this isn't similar to the instance of the golden calf during Moses' day.

**Numbers 25:1.** *And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab. (KJV)*

Remember they were marching through Moab. This is the work of Balaam.

*2) And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their [Moabite] gods: and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods.*

*3) And Israel joined himself unto Baal-peor: ... (KJV)*

Baal-peor means the Baal at Peor, the pagan god that oversaw the land of Peor.

*3b) ... and the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel. (KJV)*

You see, Baal-peor was the god who ruled the land that could be seen from the mountain top, Peor. The pagan belief was that as far as the eye could see to the horizon this god that lived on top of this mountain at Peor could control all of that land, so they built an altar there. What was the result of doing this? Let's go to Numbers 31:16. This is the influence of Balaam.

***Numbers 31:16.*** *Behold, these caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against the Lord in the matter of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the Lord. (KJV)*

Let's stop here. Do we see a trend with the exodus and bowing down to the golden calf? Then God takes them through and they're marching up through Moab. All of a sudden now Balaam, though not opposing Israel directly, but getting them to worship gods before God Almighty, getting them to bow down to these gods, to sacrifice to these gods, to commit whoredoms to these gods. There is a trend here. Israel was rushing to worship something they could see; they could put their hands on; they could look at.

Again, why would God mention Balaam in Revelation? Well, because Balaam's influence was carried into the New Testament church. We see it. We've just read it. Frankly, it is still there today. Let's go to 2 Peter 2:1. Peter warns the brethren through this letter and by extension he warns us to this very day. This is a prophecy. It was a description of what was going to happen; not long after Peter died, not long after the apostles died, but to us almost two thousand years later.

***2 Peter 2:1.*** *But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you ... (KJV)*

That is people who want to worship a teacher.

*1b) ... who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. (KJV)*

Continue in verse 15.

*15) Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray ... (KJV)*

Notice this theme.

*15b) ... following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; (KJV)*

So, we see here it's in Revelation. Peter warns of it. They are following the way of Balaam. Now let's go to Jude verse 4. Jude was the half-brother of Jesus Christ.

**Jude 4.** *For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ. (KJV)*

That's just like Balaam. Continue in verse 11.

*11) Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward ... (KJV)*

It happens so many times in the New Testament writings; beware of the doctrine of Balaam, putting something between God and yourself.

Adam Clark's Commentary says this:

The Nicolaitans taught the community of wives that adultery and fornication were things indifferent [no big deal,] that eating meats offered to idols was quite lawful and mixed several pagan rites with Christian ceremonies.

That happened from the Counsel of Nicaea on down intermingling pagan rights, pagan beliefs in with the true church.

Smith's Bible Dictionary says this regarding the doctrine of Balaam:

Mingling themselves in the orgies of idolatrous feasts they brought the impurities of those feasts into the meetings of the Christian church and all this was done, it must be remembered, not simply as an indulgence of appetite, but as a part of a system supported by a doctrine. It confirms the view which has been taken of their character to find that stress is laid in the first instance on the deeds of the Nicolaitans.

We read that in Revelation 2:6.

So, you see all of these heresies, whether it's building an idol, worshipping an idol, sacrificing to an idol, all of the adulterous things that were done down through the

centuries all have one thing in common: putting something between God and men. You see, that is the goal of the doctrine of Balaam, which is the doctrine of Satan. Get the people to look to something other than God. Put something between God and men. Today, unlike two thousand years ago, people aren't bowing down and sacrificing to idols in the sense they did in the issue of the golden calf or the time of Moab, but people bow down and they worship cars. They worship homes. They worship clothes. They worship status. They worship getting ahead on the job. They adore and idolize political figures and entertainment figures and sports figures. It's all right there. It's all in their faith and God is not in the picture. That is precisely the doctrine of Balaam.

That's out in the world, but how does it apply to us in the church? You see, the message is if we put anything between us and God, it is idolatry.

So, Ancient Israel demonstrated human nature at its core, right to the heart of it. We see examples, as we've covered today, of wanting to worship things you can see, things you can get your hands on.

God is invisible. God is supernatural. God is spirit and we can't see God. We can't do that. Thankfully, through the holy spirit, we can walk by faith and not by what we see, by our sight. Even though God is unseen I think all of us know that we can feel His presence in our daily lives. When we are praying about something, an idea comes into our head or we are praying to God to help us out of a tight situation and sure enough that tight situation goes away and there's a path forward. We feel His presence in our daily lives, because God lives in us through the holy spirit. Remember what Christ said when He was talking to the disciples His last evening? He said, we, He and His Father, will come and make their abode in you. That's exactly what happens and we can feel His presence. We can know He is there, even though we can't put our hands on Him, even though we can't see Him.

You see, we don't need to worship something we can see. We don't need that, thankfully, because what we cannot see is so far more powerful than anything we can see with our eyes, than any man or anything made with the hands of man. Let's be thankful that God has warned not to put anything between us and Him in these last days.