

THE DANGERS OF IDOLATRY

Joshua 24:22-24 (NKJV) “So Joshua said to the people, “You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen the LORD for yourselves, to serve Him.” And they said, “We are witnesses!” (23) “Now therefore,” he said, “put away the foreign gods which are among you, and incline your heart to the LORD God of Israel.” (24) And the people said to Joshua, “The LORD our God we will serve, and His voice we will obey!””

Why would Joshua need to repeat his appeal to the Israelites to get rid of their idols?

The threat of idolatry is not a theoretical one. Earlier, on the plains of Moab, in a similar context, Moses asked for the same decision:

Deuteronomy 30:19-20 (NKJV) “I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live; (20) that you may love the LORD your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He is your life and the length of your days; and that you may dwell in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them.”

The gods that are in view now are not the ones of Egypt or those beyond the river, but they are found “among them.”

1. The **first danger** is not the gods behind but the gods ahead of us.

Joshua 24:14-15 (NKJV) “Now therefore, fear the LORD, serve Him in sincerity and in truth, and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the River and in Egypt. Serve the LORD! (15) And if it seems evil to you to serve the LORD,

choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.””

Therefore, Joshua pleads with his people to incline their hearts to the Lord. The Hebrew term used here, *natah*, means “to stretch,” “to bend.”

2. The **second danger** is, **not listening to God**:

2 Kings 19:16 (NKJV) “Incline Your ear, O LORD, and hear; open Your eyes, O LORD, and see; and hear the words of Sennacherib, which he has sent to reproach the living God.”

Natah means: **We expect** God to lean His ear to hear us:

Daniel 9:18 (NKJV) “O my God, incline Your ear and hear; open Your eyes and see our desolations, and the city which is called by Your name; for we do not present our supplications before You because of our righteous deeds, but because of Your great mercies.”

Our Appeal: Psalm 31:2 (NKJV) “Bow down Your ear to me, deliver me speedily; Be my rock of refuge, A fortress of defense to save me.”

Natah, is also the attitude required of Israel later by the prophets: **Isaiah 55:3 (NKJV)** “Incline your ear, and come to Me. Hear, and your soul shall live; And I will make an everlasting covenant with you— The sure mercies of David.”

Jeremiah 7:24 (NKJV) “Yet they did not obey or incline their ear, but followed the counsels and the dictates of their evil hearts, and went backward and not forward.”

Hebrews 12:25-29 (NKJV) “See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke

on earth, much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven, (26) whose voice then shook the earth; but now He has promised, saying, “Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven.” (27) Now this, “Yet once more,” indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain. (28) Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. (29) For our God is a consuming fire.”

It is employed to indicate the apostasy of Solomon when his heart inclined toward foreign gods:

The sinful human heart does not have the natural tendency to bend and listen to God’s voice. It takes conscious decisions on our part to incline it toward fulfilling God’s will.

Solomon did not listen to the Lord:

1 Kings 11:2, 4, 9 (NKJV) “(2) from the nations of whom the LORD had said to the children of Israel, “You shall not intermarry with them, nor they with you. Surely they will turn away your hearts after their gods.” Solomon clung to these in love. (4) For it was so, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned his heart after other gods; and his heart was not loyal to the LORD his God, as was the heart of his father David. (9) So the LORD became angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned from the LORD God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice.”

Many Christians refuse to listen to God’s Law:

Psalms 78:1 (NKJV) “Give ear, O my people, to my law; Incline your ears to the words of my mouth.”

If we listen to God, we avoid divine rejection and hardship:

Proverbs 1:22-33 (NKJV) “How long, you simple ones, will you love simplicity? For scorers delight in their scorning, and fools

hate knowledge. (23) Turn at my rebuke; Surely I will pour out my spirit on you; I will make my words known to you. (24) Because I have called and you refused, I have stretched out my hand and no one regarded, (25) Because you disdained all my counsel, And would have none of my rebuke, (26) I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your terror comes, (27) When your terror comes like a storm, And your destruction comes like a whirlwind, When distress and anguish come upon you. (28) “Then they will call on me, but I will not answer; They will seek me diligently, but they will not find me. (29) Because they hated knowledge And did not choose the fear of the LORD, (30) They would have none of my counsel *And* despised my every rebuke. (31) Therefore they shall eat the fruit of their own way, And be filled to the full with their own fancies. (32) For the turning away of the simple will slay them, And the complacency of fools will destroy them; (33) But whoever listens to me will dwell safely, And will be secure, without fear of evil.”

Jesus pronounced judgment on the Jewish leaders because they refused to hear Him:

Matthew 13:13-17 (NKJV) “Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. (14) and in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says: *“Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, And seeing you will see and not perceive; (15) For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them.”* (16) But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear; (17) for assuredly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous *men* desired to see what you see, and did not see *it*, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear *it*.”

There are conditions to God hearing us:

2 Chronicles 7:14-15 (NKJV) “if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land. (15) Now My eyes will be open and My ears attentive to prayer *made* in this place.”

God listens to the Righteous:

Psalms 34:15 (NKJV) “The eyes of the LORD *are* on the righteous, And His ears *are open* to their cry.”

God open His ears to those that open their ears to Him:

1 Peter 3:12 (NKJV) “*For the eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, And His ears are open to their prayers; But the face of the LORD is against those who do evil.*””

The final warning message to the world is predicated on hearing:

Revelation 14:6-7 (NKJV) “(6) Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people— (7) saying with a loud voice, “Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water.””

In every age of the church, it was predicated on the Christian listening to God:

Revelation 3:22 (NKJV) ““He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” ’ ””