

# What is Jesus Doing?

## CRUSHING IDOLS

There is an interesting and important representation that runs through the Old Testament, concerning the process by which idols were removed from God's people.

Israel's history was marked with idolatry. From the moment they were redeemed out of Egypt, Israel worshiped other gods.

Standing at the foot of Mount Sinai, where they were waiting for Moses to return with God's Law, because of their impatience, Israel made a Golden Calf to worship in the place of Yahweh.

If you recall when Moses did come down the mountain with the tablets of the law in his hand, written by the very finger of God, His people, Israel, were having a raucous celebration, worshiping these Golden Calf idols that they had made.

When Moses saw what they were doing he was enraged. With the Glory of the Lord still upon him, he burned the idol, crushed it into fine powder, and poured it into a nearby river.

In Deuteronomy, Moses recounts this event for Israel's remembrance:

*Then I took your sin, the calf which you had made, and burned it with fire and crushed it and ground it very small, until it was as fine as dust; and I threw its dust into the brook that descended from the mountain.*

- Deuteronomy 9:21

This act sets the stage for the methods of the few righteous Kings throughout Israel's history in ridding the idols from their midst.

## **What is Jesus Doing?**

Both Israel and Judah went through cycles of sin and idolatry, followed by repentance, followed by the deliverance of the Lord and on and on, over and over again.

After David replaced Saul as King over the Twelve Tribes of Israel, and Solomon built the Temple at Jerusalem, the Tribes split into two nations when Rehoboam, the son of Solomon angered the other tribes...

The Northern Kingdom, continued to be known as Israel and consisted of the tribes of Reuben, Simeon, Ephraim, Manasseh, Naphtali, Gad, Issachar, Zebulun, Asher and Dan.

The Southern Kingdom thereafter known as Judah, consisted of the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin.

Solomon's Temple, which was the original House of the Lord, remained at Jerusalem in Judah.

Then, because the Northern Kingdom of Israel no longer had access to the official Temple at Jerusalem, King Jeroboam, the first King of the newly split Israel in the North, built two religious sanctuaries in two cities on either side of the nation, one in Dan and one in Bethel.

In a foreshadowing of the idolatry that would plague both Israel and later Judah, Jeroboam put in each of these religious sanctuaries (I kid you not) a Golden Calf Idol for the people to worship.

It should then come as no surprise that these 10 tribes in the north, Israel, became the poster child for idolatrous sin and overall bad behavior.

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If you haven't read all of first and second kings and first and second chronicles which are the histories of the kings of Israel and Judah in the Bible you should read it.

As is the case with most Old Testament scripture if you really break it down you will see how both Israel and Judah disappointed God over and over again, and then you will see the trail of broken promises that eventually led to the one who never broke His promise the Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ.

As the writers of the Bible, both Old and New Testament were really pens in the hand of the Almighty, there really is no part of the Bible that is not beneficial to your spiritual life to read, contemplate and meditate upon.

In scripture, no detail is irrelevant, and no relevant detail is omitted.

As the Apostle Paul told Timothy...

*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

- 2 Timothy 3:16

In the books of Kings and Chronicles, out of Twenty Kings of the Northern Kingdom Israel there were NO good Kings. They were all idolatrous and evil and as the Biblical account says repeatedly, they walked in the ways of their fathers and served the idols their fathers served, doing evil continually...

Out of the Nineteen Kings (and one Queen) of the Southern Kingdom of Judah only 8 did "what was right in the sight of the Lord".

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The Lord also raised up great Prophets during this time like Elijah and Elishah, who did signs and wonders to bring the people back to the Lord and to warn them of the cost of their idolatry.

The Prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel also were sent to apostate Israel to warn them of their idolatrous behavior and give them visions of hope concerning the Messianic King who would come and set the world right.

Before we talk about identifying and getting rid of the idols in OUR lives, let's talk a bit about the source and nature of Idolatry.

All idolatry is by nature demonic.

Does that surprise you?

Simply put, an idol is anything or anyone other than God in which you put all your trust, to provide you...

- your peace,
- your security,
- your joy,
- your sense of self-worth,
- your sense of purpose,
- the list goes on...

After all, it was our enemy, or Sat-an (which means the adversary in Hebrew), who was originally the Archangel Lucifer the Angel of light and decided that serving God was not good enough for him and that he wanted to be God.

He was cast to earth for his rebellion along with a whole host of rebellious angels who became the demons who were the small G gods of the Old Testament. These were the “gods of Egypt” for example...

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When the Bible speaks of idols it's talking about these small G gods that were worshipped not only by the people who did not know the God of Israel but to the great shame of both Israel and Judah were worshipped by God's people themselves.

That is why God's First commandment is that "You shall have no other gods before Me".

But the Second Commandment says this...

*You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them.*

- Exodus 20:4-5A

Now before you go home and break those little figurines that are sitting on your mantle that your kids made when they were five or six, let me explain that what this commandment is referring to is not just making a carved image.

It refers to those Golden Calves in our lives. The key words here are "you shall not bow down to them or serve them".

The idols of the land that God's Chosen people worshipped caused them to be separated from God.

The Idols of metal, wood and stone that the people worshipped were powered by the demonic forces, the demon gods that ruled the people who desired them.

We are going to talk today about idolatry and how the Biblical Kings dealt with it and how WE can recognize the idolatry in our lives and deal with it (remove it from our lives) because of what Christ did for us.

So first let's look at how the Righteous Kings of Judah dealt with idolatry.

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Every time that the Lord raised up a righteous King to deliver His people from their evil practices and enemies, they would remove the idols from the land in a manner similar to that of Moses.

There were three notable kings of Judah who turned from their own father's idolatrous ways and turned back to follow the God of Israel as their forefather David had done.

These were Asa, Hezekiah and Josiah.

Perhaps the greatest reformer King in Israel's history (our Lord Jesus excepted) was Josiah, the 16th King of Judah. His grandfather Manasseh was one of the worst of the worst of the Kings of Judah and he had even instituted child sacrifice during his reign.

His father Amon walked in the evil ways of his father, but Josiah turned from the sins of his grandfather and "did what was right in the eyes of the Lord".

His reforms were substantial and are recorded in great detail in 2 Kings 23.

And the king commanded Hilkiah the high priest, the priests of the second order, and the doorkeepers, to bring out of the temple of the LORD all the articles that were made for Baal, for Asherah, and for all the host of heaven; and he burned them outside Jerusalem in the fields of Kidron and carried their ashes to Bethel.

Then he removed the idolatrous priests whom the kings of Judah had ordained to burn incense on the high places in the cities of Judah and in the places all around Jerusalem, and those who burned incense to Baal, to the sun, to the moon, to the constellations, and to all the host of heaven.

*And he brought out the wooden image from the house of the LORD, to the Brook Kidron outside Jerusalem, burned it at the Brook Kidron and ground it to ashes, and threw its ashes on the graves of the common people...*

- 2 Kings 23:4-6

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*The altars that were on the roof, the upper chamber of Ahaz, which the kings of Judah had made, and the altars which Manasseh had made in the two courts of the house of the LORD, the king broke down and pulverized there, and threw their dust into the Brook Kidron.*

- 2 Kings 23:12

Consider the way in which the Brook Kidron is at the center of Josiah's removal of idols in the same way as Moses removed the residue of the Golden Calf he destroyed.

The pattern of crushing idols and idolatrous altars, and throwing them into the Brook Kidron, was symbolic. It represented how God would permanently remove idolatry from the lives of His people.

Note the process...

- First, the King recognized the sin of idolatry that was causing the trouble that the Lord had allowed to come upon the land.
- Second, he acknowledged his responsibility to turn the people back to God.
- Third, he removed the priests of the Idols from the land.
- Fourth, he began the process of removing the idols from the Temple.
- Fifth, he hauled the Idols down to the Brook Kidron, crushed them to powder and threw them in the Brook so that they would be removed far from the Temple.
- Finally, he reinstituted the practices of true worship among the people.

Now keeping those things in mind, we're going to talk about how we can recognize and remove the idols that are causing trouble in our lives.

Remember that I said that all idolatry is by its nature demonic.

Idolatry is that demonic insistent voice in your mind that tells you that God is not trustworthy.

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Remember, God wants you to enjoy your life. He gave you talents and abilities that are unique and special to you and that he wants you to treat as precious gifts that He can help you unwrap for your joy and for His glory.

However, there are other things about you that are challenging, and the Lord wants to help you to work through and with those things.

Some of those things are physical disabilities or weaknesses that you were born with.

But other things might be things that the world and the lies of the enemy have implanted in you from a very young age that have become obsessions AKA Idols.

- Maybe it's your temper which evidences itself as impatience with others, making you argumentative or easy to anger.
- Maybe it's an unhealthy obsession with sex, which can lead to toxic attitudes towards others and drive you into despair, or pornography addiction.
- Maybe it's an uncontrollable urge to eat more than is healthy because it makes you feel good.
- maybe it's a desire for control, driving you to want to be served rather than serve others.
- Or maybe it's an obsession with getting high on drugs or alcohol that has become an addiction.

These are all things that are part of the natural man that are not who you ARE in Christ Jesus.

The good news is that just like the good Kings of Judah, you are able to overcome the dysfunction of your past because you now have the Mind of Christ, and the power to access it, which we talked about last week.



## **What is Jesus Doing?**

It is in the enemy's best interest for you to be obsessed with the idols in your life. The things that are not good for you which keep you from in fact hearing God's voice, doing His will and most of all enjoying His presence.

That idolatrous demonic voice in your head will tell you that that old killjoy God does not want you to enjoy your idol/obsession.

That the thing that you love to do or that thing you love to think about or that thing or person that you are obsessed with is too important and too all-consuming for you to give it to God to put in its rightful place which is under Him and not over Him.

See... not all idols are inherently bad things, or at least they weren't until you made an obsession of them which edged God out...

Here's one of the big ones that Jesus mentioned specifically to be careful about.

Money. Mammon.

Let's camp out on that one for a moment. If it was important enough that it is the one that Jesus told us about specifically the most, then it is worthy of our close attention.

Remembering that idolatry is, at its core, worshiping the creation over the Creator, and anything that is given over the Giver. Anything we put our trust in other than God is an idol.

People often will base their security and peace on the money that they have in the bank, or in retirement funds, or in Crypto rather than in God their sustainer and Jesus their Savior.

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Jesus tells us this...

*No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.*

- Matthew 6:24

The active words here are hate and love. It is easy to understand how we can love God and despise money in the sense that we are passionate towards God and esteem money lightly.

But Jesus words are even stronger than that in that He says that if you love God you hate money and if you love money you hate God. What he really means is you are loyal to one or you are loyal to the other.

You either put your trust in the money you have been given or you trust the Giver, who is God.

It's the love of money that makes Mammon an Idol which is why Paul tells Timothy this...

*For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.*

- 1 Timothy 6:10\*\*

Maybe this will help you to understand better the way I believe I understand it.

It is God's heart for us to love Him and love people and use money, rather than for us to love money and use God and people for our own benefit.

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This is also a matter of trust. You either trust God, or you trust money. We should each examine ourselves on this particular point.

By the way, faithfully tithing is a particularly good way to stay away from the idolatry of money.

Giving God His Ten Percent back upfront every week shows a willingness to obey Him and to trust Him with the other 90%. I can only tell you that it has been a freeing practice in my life and God has been generous and faithful always.

I love the way the new living translation says the words of Malachi the prophet...

*Bring all the tithes into the storehouse so there will be enough food in my Temple. If you do," says the Lord of Heaven's Armies, "I will open the windows of heaven for you. I will pour out a blessing so great you won't have enough room to take it in! Try it! Put me to the test!*

- Malachi 3:10

Okay, that's enough about Mammon. Let's talk about some other idols and then what we can do to rid our lives of them...

Some of our idols are obviously bad, like addictions... to drugs or pornography or cigarettes or alcohol or sex or food.

Even addictions to some things can be a slippery slope because healthy sex within the bonds of marriage is something that God gave us as a good thing and we all need to eat and even scripture says that wine was given to cheer both God and men.

But idolatrous obsession with any of these things destroys our lives and keeps us from a healthy relationship with God and with other people.

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Here's another really, really bad obsession that has absolutely no good application: unforgiveness. Jesus was very clear about the destructive power of unforgiveness. Unforgiveness is an obsession in that it is by its very nature an Idol.

I want to propose that when a Christian withholds forgiveness - most especially when it's asked for - that person is behaving in an idolatrous manner. The idol they are serving is self.

They are refusing to forgive a sin against them which has already been forgiven by God, whom the sin is ultimately against thereby placing themselves above God! When you refuse to forgive someone, you are placing yourself over God's command to have no other Gods before Him. That is the Idol of Pride.

But there are also things of the world that don't seem of themselves to be anything bad, but we have allowed them to completely consume our thoughts and our attention thereby making them Idols.

- Things like sports, Sports figures and sports teams.
- Things like Popular Music, Musicians and famous culture heroes.
- Things like politics or political figures.
- Things like Social Media.
- Things like hobbies or pastimes like video games or watching movies or TV.
- Things like possessions... cars, houses, guns, guitars, entertainment systems,
- the list goes on...

Any pastime that we spend more time doing, thinking about, or talking about than we spend meditating upon God's goodness has become an idol.

Remember last week we talked about building intimacy with God and how the best way to do it were with the 3T's of Time, Talk and Trust.

## What is Jesus Doing?

Spending all of your time thinking and talking about things other than your relationship with God and how you can bring glory to Him brings you to trust in things other than God for your joy, your peace and even your freedom.

The enemy wants you in bondage and so he will continually make suggestions like...

- God is unreasonable...
- The idol is fun, and you deserve it.
- The idol is the ONLY bad thing you do and you NEED it to feel good.
- The idol is protecting you.
- The idol is too strong to break even for God.

These last two are particularly true of addictions and unforgiveness.

But as we know the enemy is a liar and the father of lies...

So... since we have the Mind of Christ, here's how we can begin going about crushing idolatry in our lives...

Remember how we said the good Kings of Judah removed the Idolatry from the Temple? Now remember that you ARE the Temple of the Living God in Christ! With that in mind, let's look at how the Kings did it again...

- First, the King recognized the sin of idolatry that was causing the trouble that the Lord had allowed to come upon the land.
- Second, he acknowledged his responsibility to turn the people back to God.
- Third, he removed the priests of the Idols from the land.
- Fourth, he began the process of removing the idols from the Temple.

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- Fifth he hauled the Idols down to the Brook Kidron, crushed them to powder and threw them in the Brook so that they would be removed far from the Temple.
- Finally, he reinstituted the practices of true worship among the people.

So the analogy is this for you and me.

- First, we ask the Lord to help us recognize the Idolatry that is hurting us.
- Second, we agree with God that the Idol is not something we are or want any more in our lives.
- Third, we put people on notice who are enabling us in our addictions and obsessions that they are no longer welcome to be our priests of those things.
- Fourth, ask God for the strength to quit doing the idolatrous thing, believing that He is with you and then just DO IT. Quit, trusting His strength not your own.
- Fifth, get rid of anything and everything in your life that feeds these obsessions and addictions and obsessions.
- And finally realize that you are the temple of the Holy Spirit and begin to apply those 3T's of Time, Talk and Trust to the things of the Lord.

When the kings of Judah cleared out the temple of the Idols and the people returned to practicing true worship of the God of Israel they experienced peace, security and prosperity that they had not had while they were worshiping idols.

That's what it will look like for you as well.

Oh... and here's one last thing that is really interesting about the Brook Kidron where Asa, Josiah and Hezekiah threw their crushed Idols...

The Brook Kidron comes up quite frequently in the Old Testament and one really interesting time in the New Testament.

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Other than the kings destroying their idols there, the Brook Kidron comes up in 2 Samuel 15 when King David's son Absalom usurps his throne and David has to flee Jerusalem for his life. Look at this...

*And all the country wept with a loud voice, and all the people crossed over. The king himself also crossed over the Brook Kidron, and all the people crossed over toward the way of the wilderness.*

- 2 Samuel 15:23

And the one time that the Brook Kidron is mentioned in the New Testament is when Jesus is approaching his final day and He and his disciples cross over the Brook Kidron to get to the Garden of Gethsemane where our Lord will make His final decision to take the Cross for us.

Right after Chapter 17 of John's Gospel, when Jesus prays for all believers for all time, we see this verse...

*When Jesus had spoken these words, He went out with His disciples over the Brook Kidron, where there was a garden, which He and His disciples entered.*

- John 18:1

How ironic that the very Brook that David had to cross when fleeing from his enemies, Jesus had to cross a thousand years later to meet his.

Because all scripture is important, it is surely no accident that it was this very Brook Kidron that Jesus crossed when He entered the Garden where He was betrayed, that is symbolic of the place where we are now able to remove our idols far away from us because of what He did on The Cross of Calvary.



Let's pray,

- John Henry Raskin, Roadhouse Rabbi