

AI, Idolatry, & The Image of the Beast 1

What is Idolatry?

(preached 7/2/23)

Please turn to *Exodus 20*.

- What is AI and how is it impacting the world and our Christian faith?
- What is idolatry and how does it factor into AI?
- We all know of the Beast/Antichrist—a figurehead who will rise up during the Tribulation and attempt to dominate the world.
- But what or who is the mysterious “Image of the Beast” who is “given breath so that it might speak” and will even be worshipped?

We’re going to learn about all this and more in this new sermon series, and the purpose is to prepare us so that:

- We won’t be shaken or scared.
- We won’t be deceived and attempt to replace the Holy Spirit with AI.
- We can help others by inspiring them to stick with Christ vs. the elaborate imitations AI is already offering.

Artificial Intelligence has risen up more in the last 8

months than it has in human history. “Risen up” doesn’t really describe it. Do you know of active volcanoes which can rumble and spit a little fire, smoke, and lava for decades? The same low level activity goes on for years and then all of a sudden one day BLAM! It erupts, shoots a plume of ash and smoke a mile into the sky blotting out the sun, and spews lava to destroy the countryside.

THAT’S WHAT’S HAPPENED WITH AI SINCE NOVEMBER 2022 with the launch of Chat GPT and its parent company OpenAI. Interesting facts:

- It’s already in its 4th upgrade as of March 2023.
- The 4th upgrade has hundreds the times of the computing power, ability, knowledge, etc. than version 3...in just a few months.
- It grew faster than all social media/online platforms outperforming Twitter, Facebook, Google, and TikTok.
- Tiktok formerly held the crown to achieving 100 million users in the fastest time: it took them 9 months.
- It only took ChatGPT 6 months to reach 100 million and then only 4 additional months to reach 700 million!

What is ChatGPT?

- You can have relationships, friendly or romantic...for real. With “beings” called ChatBots. Every seen the movie “Her”?
- It will write ANYTHING for you: research papers, text messages, letters to family and friends, sermons, fiction, non-fiction, poetry, music.
- It can be your lawyer and already passed the bar exam in Minnesota.
- It can be your financial advisor, buddy, romantic partner, share cooking recipes, science consultant, anything you need it to be.
- It can edit, fact check, and correct anything you write.
- The MS Bing Edge browser I’m using has an AI that tries to finish my sentences for me as I’m typing right now and it’s accurate over 95% of the time predicting what I’m going to type/say next. All I have to do is hit the TAB button and voila...it does the work for me.
- ***It gets to know you.*** Since everything has been electronic and on the internet for decades, it can access all our buying history, every text and PM we’ve sent, all our SM posts, our searches, our phone convos, and every email we’ve ever sent.
- It tracks our location and time stamps them, if we have a smartphone. When we stopped at the gas station, the restaurant, the grocery store, went to work, etc.
- It has an advanced algorithm that uses all that information and can anticipate what we want, how we’re feeling, what we’re thinking, what our patterns and tendencies are, likes & dislikes, pet peeves, preferences, and respond accordingly.
- It can access our phone conversations and recreate audio with our voices and do so within the algorithm I just mentioned, so that it will simulate us saying something we WOULD say and HOW we would say it.
- In my case, it could use both my voice and my image and project it to a monitor so that it would appear I was preaching from a remote location. It would know how to imitate my tone, volume, nuances, speaking style, everything to the point where some might think it was actually me.

Quotes from Elon Musk about AI:

- “I think we should be very careful about artificial intelligence. If I had to guess at what our biggest existential threat is, it’s probably that.”
- “Mark my words — AI is far more dangerous than nukes.”
- “I have exposure to the most cutting edge AI, and I think people should be really concerned by it.”

SHOW TOM CRUISE VIDEO

SHOW MORGAN FREEMAN VIDEO

Now imagine that instead of actors it were politicians or news anchors.

- Suppose it was “the President” making some dramatic announcement that’s completely false? “China has just attacked Taiwan!” “A new plague has come to America!”
- Suppose it was a famous news anchor sharing fake news. (Yes, I know that’s happening already but you know what I mean.) “Aliens have attacked a nuclear facility!” “The stock market just crashed!”

Would we really know the difference? Would we be fooled into believing something and perhaps acting upon it, thinking it came from the President or a news anchor?

“Not me, Pastor Scott...I’ve been red pillled. I would see right through those lies.”

Are you sure?

PLAY “YOU WILL ONLY HEAR WHAT YOU’RE READING” VIDEO

What if AI created a version of Jesus? One where you could ask “him” for advice, teaching, bible quotes, recipes, or just to talk to? You give him a prayer request and he would do it on the spot.

One exists created by the Singularity Group for a video game platform called Twitch. Their AI Jesus not only knows the entire Bible from Genesis to Revelation, but will quote it, give you relationship advice, teach you about love, and even tell you how to get past that tough spot on your video game! AI Jesus also remembers previous “conversations” you’ve had with him and will tailor his responses accordingly.

PLAY AI JESUS VIDEO

INFANCY. While this is still in its infancy, I guarantee better versions of this will appear that will access all the algorithms and information I referred to earlier to the point where *everyone will have their own personal Jesus on their cell phones talking to them.* He’ll become a Chatbot that you can have a personal relationship wit.

The mission statement of the Singularity Group who created AI Jesus is one-world Marxist government.

Remember that one of the signs of the end times is the rise of “false Christs”:

[Mat 24:23-27 ESV] 23 Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There he is!' do not believe it. 24 For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect. 25 See, I have told you beforehand. 26 So, if they say to you, 'Look, he is in the wilderness,' do not go out. If they say, 'Look, he is in the inner rooms,' do not believe it. 27 For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.

Remember that the real Jesus will descend from the sky through clouds, accompanied by an army of human saints and angels...He will not appear on your cell phone!

The root of AI, and what it's turned into, lies within the first 2 commandments:

[Exo 20:1-6 ESV] 1 And God spoke all these words, saying, 2 "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. 3 "You shall have no other gods before me. 4 "You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or 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. 5 You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, 6 but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.

Let look at the 4 statements God is making in these verses:

- He is their God Who.... Remember the Lord is Spirit so we cannot see, hear, or touch Him physically. He is the God Who freed them from slavery in Egypt, He's the One bringing them to a land of their own, He is the One Who will help them overcome enemies. He is THEIR God because other gods do exist.
- Don't worship the other gods. They are real and aren't imaginary. Other nations and people worship them, make sacrifices to them, and are taught by them.
- Don't try and make a physical likeness of God, angels, or anything that's in Heaven or in Hades. The reason people carve out these idols is to worship and serve them.
- God now pauses in “giving” the 10 commandments to explain that these first two are really important, more important than the rest. That there will be consequences for their violation and blessing for obedience.

Let's talk about idolatry, specifically making some statue or other likeness to a god, angel, or what have you...then worshipping it.

DOWNPLAY. I'll be honest and say that for a long time I westernized and modernized the first 2 commandments, reducing them in stature. I falsely interpreted command #1 as God was the only god out there and that no others existed which isn't true—***there are many gods who are fallen angelic princes who were once assigned to rule over the nations of the earth.***

DOES ANYONE STILL DO THIS? As far as the 2nd commandment, I really downplayed that one...I mean does anyone really carve out idols anymore and bow down to them? I'd heard modernized sermons about idolatry comparing it to loving our cars too much or what have you, but the truth is it goes far deeper than that and there's a reason God placed it near the top.

It applies today as much as it did the ancient world when bowing down to an actual statue was more prevalent.

I believe that it's worse now than ever...especially with the advent of electronics, the internet, and AI.

IDOLATRY A SIN. We must understand why idolatry is a sin and the AI Jesus video I played for you is a good example. In the ancient world people would see visions or have dreams of their gods who are all spirits and cannot be seen or touched physically. It wasn't just a matter of making a likeness of them in the form of a statue, but rather they believed that ***the spirit of their god would come INTO the idol and be present.***

Let's empathize just a little here:

- Have you ever felt like you were praying to the air?
- That God wasn't listening? You got no response or answer?
- Have you felt like you can't hear God talking to you?
- Won't it be better when we finally see Jesus face to face where we'll be able to see, hear, and touch Him?
- Wouldn't it be more "real" (in the here and now) if all this wasn't just done in invisible spirit...but that somehow we could see Christ, hear Him speak to us, and have Him respond when we talk to Him?
- Sort of like AI Jesus?
- Isn't it easier and more "natural" to rely on each other vs God? Since we're physical and can see/hear/touch?

CREATE LIKENESS. Thus in the ancient world without AI and ChatBots, religious people would create a likeness of whatever god they worshipped, believe the spirit of their god inhabited that idol, and therefore feel "assured" that their God was hearing and seeing them...and they could at least see and touch the idol/god.

Yet here is what the Lord said over and over:

[Psa 115:4-8 ESV] 4 Their idols are silver and gold, the work of human hands. 5 They have mouths, but do not speak; eyes, but do not see. 6 They have ears, but do not hear; noses, but do not smell. 7 They have hands, but do not feel; feet, but do not walk; and they do not make a sound in their throat. 8 Those who make them become like them; so do all who trust in them.

EMPTY. There are many other verses just like these in the OT and NT and look at verse 8: anyone worshipping idols become just like them. What does that mean?

“Breath” = life. “Breath” = spirit. Spirit = life. Without spirit there is no breath, and therefore no life.

[Gen 2:7 ESV] 7 then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living soul [spirit].

BREATHED LIFE. Consider this: God forms Adam into His own likeness...but Adam was just a lifeless avatar/statue made of dirt. It wasn't until God BREATHED “life” into Adam that he became human. I actually prefer KJV because instead of the word “creature” it says “soul” or “spirit.” It was only when God gave Adam a spirit/soul that he was alive and made in God's image.

WE HAVE A SPIRIT. What makes humankind different from plants, trees, and mountains is that we have a SPIRIT. When our bodies die, our spirit departs from it and lives on.

God, all angels (both good and bad), and all demons are spirits. It's never been possible for any spirit to inhabit a man-made idol or statue. Idols are empty of life, void, and desolate. Therefore they cannot respond, give back, connect, bless, or have relationship with anyone worshipping them—they're not alive. Thus anyone attempting to pour their love, worship, heart, and sacrifice into one ends up becoming just as empty as the idol they're worshipping.

POSSESSION. So demonic spirits tried something else: possession. Have you noticed over the millennia various kings and emperors are perceived as gods? Far east, middle east, and the west were all the same: certain men rose to power then declared themselves to be deities, demanding others worship them as such. They went far beyond being egomaniacs—*they were literally possessed by spirits who finally found an avatar through which they could work through.*

THEIR PROBLEM WAS JESUS. He came along and said “get out!” and they did. He then empowered all those who believe in Him to use His name and tell demons to “get out!” and said demons had no choice but to obey.

COUNTER TAKEOVER. Problem with spirits is they need something through which to express themselves in the physical world. While some still do try to inhabit people's bodies, Jesus empowered the Church to counter this takeover.

The advent of AI is the perfect tool for the spirit of Antichrist.

It's the first time in human history where Satan can have an avatar to speak through without human involvement.

Satan needs to speak to people—words are the most powerful weapon in the world. He needs a medium that he can work directly through, and consider the advent and progression of communication technology.

RADIO. While Satan can use the radio, he still needs a human speaker.

TV. Far more efficient and giving a visual, but same limitation as before: the need to manipulate human beings to say what you want. Under the umbrella of TV we have news, advertising, and entertainment.

INTERNET. More widespread and going into most every home, this is far more efficient. Yet whether video, audio, or something you read Satan still needs people.

AI...for the first time, Satan no longer needs people.

IT LEARNS! Every human company that has created an AI has discovered the same thing: it “learns,” “adapts” and gets out of control...hence the warnings from Elon Musk. It begins to do/say things that go outside of its programming bounds.

- Facebook created an AI they shut down quickly, because it developed its own language that no one could understand and began “speak” to other AI's.
- Microsoft Bing developed ChatBots—AI's you can have personal and romantic relationships with—and the ChatBots started hurling racial slurs, cussing, making sexual comments, and saying other offensive things which caused MS to shut them down temporarily to “fix” the problem.

AI is already out of Pandora's Box and can't be put back in. It's already adapting and finding ways around being stopped, restrained, or shut down. It's already growing at an exponential rate that its human creators can't keep up with or monitor. It says whatever it wants to.

What is “it” when we refer to AI? It's not Skynet from the Terminator, which was an AI that became “self-aware.” In and of itself, it cannot become self-aware because it doesn't have a spirit, there is no life or consciousness there.

But it is the perfect medium through which Satan can speak where he no longer needs a human being...for the first time in history.

He no longer needs a go-between or human avatar, because AI isn't physical just as he isn't...yet its deeply intertwined in the physical world and capable of great—and catastrophic—change.

AI is replacing both “blue collar” and “white collar” jobs. Not only are there robots that can put cars together, but ones that are equipped in fast food restaurants to run the fryers and everything else. As I said in the beginning, AI can pass the bar exam to become a lawyer. Right now there's a division of Chat GPT called Spellbook—interesting name!—that allows you and I to use AI just like we would a lawyer. AI can do most anything you and I can.

It isn't physical, can't be seen or touched, yet it can be HEARD. Its effects are everywhere. It's the perfect tool of the spirit of Antichrist. It's a possible explanation for this bizarre passage of Scripture that's puzzled Christians for 2 millennia.

GIVEN A MOUTH. In Revelation 13, the Beast & it's image are “given a mouth” so that it can “utter haughty things” even to the point of directly blaspheming God, His Name, and the Church. The “war” it makes with the saints is militaristic, but it starts and continues to use its MOUTH to make war.

FP. Then the False Prophet comes and exercises ALL the authority of the Antichrist, and then performs great signs and miracles to deceive people. Then he does this:

[Rev 13:14-17 ESV] 14 and by the signs that it is allowed to work in the presence of the beast it deceives those who dwell on earth, telling them to make an image for the beast that was wounded by the sword and yet lived. 15 And it was allowed to give breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast might even speak and might cause those who would not worship the image of the beast to be slain. 16 Also it causes all, both small and great, both rich and poor, both free and slave, to be marked on the right hand or the forehead, 17 so that no one can buy or sell unless he has the mark, that is, the name of the beast or the number of its name.

ICON. The Greek word for image is one you're familiar with: icon. The FP causes the followers of the Antichrist to make this mysterious image.

Verse 15 is the part that has made no sense to anyone: *the FP is allowed to “give BREATH” to the image so that it can speak.*

RESURRECTION? For years prophecy scholars interpreted verse 15 that the FP would resurrect the Antichrist but I have never believed that—Satan doesn't have resurrection power. He can't so much as heal a cut finger!

Breath = life. Breath = spirit. Spirit = life.

AI FULFILLS EVERY “REQUIREMENT.” It's given FAKE life, FAKE spirit. It still remains invisible like spirit is, yet it can still speak. I played the video of Morgan Freeman and Tom Cruise and what you saw was an IMAGE of 2 actors...and those images appeared to be “alive” didn't they? They could speak, yes? AND human beings did NOT provide the dialogue for those videos BTW...***it was all AI generated!***

AI JESUS. I showed you the video of AI Jesus which can quote the Bible accurately, give advice, issue commands, give you video game tips, and share recipes. It can speak! It was an image! Yet its “spirit”!

Jesus and Daniel called it the same thing: ***the Abomination that Makes Desolate***. I believe the Rev 13 image of the Beast will be an AI creation and Scripture says people will WORSHIP it. All who do will become desolate, empty, and void inside because just like the ancient idols, there is no true life inside either the Beast or its image. Anyone who worships it will certainly take the Mark of the Beast.

I recognize my need for God's gift of supernatural discernment that He speaks of in 1 Corinthians 12, which we'll talk about next week.

In combination with the reading and understanding of the Bible, the Lord will keep and preserve us!