

WAR OF THE WORLDVIEWS #28

“Shopping for a God”

Introduction

A. Welcome Back to the War of the Worldviews

1. We are in a life and death battle for the heart and soul of our nation.
2. Our enemy is not “flesh and blood”. We are in a spiritual warfare; a battle over whose god is the real God; it’s like a real-life “game of thrones”.

3. We call it a real life ‘game of thrones’ because all human beings are wired for *religion*. Man must have a “god” on the throne of his heart. And he will have one; either the true God of the Bible or something he invents to sit in God’s place on the throne of his life.

- a. “Religion” is not an evil word; it is simply a belief in something supreme.
- b. In a very real sense, all human beings are religious because all everyone has something sitting on the throne of his life.
- c. Atheism is a religion; a belief that there is no God. But what the atheist overlooks is the fact that just because he does not believe in “the” God does not mean that he does not have “a” god!

“Christians tend to believe that a denial of the God of the Bible means a denial of religion altogether. This is never true. Even the most ardent atheist is religious.”

Gary DeMar

d. Testimony: I have proved this over the years. When someone tells me they are an atheist and don’t believe in God, I simply ask them, “Then what DO you believe in?” I have never any of them say, “Nothing”!

- “I believe in Me”
- “I believe in Karma”
- “I believe (science, education) can save us”

4. The point is that, everyone is “shopping for a god”; the human heart must have a god; if it doesn’t have the real God, it will “invent” one.

“When people cease to believe in God they do not stop believing. What is worse, they believe in anything, no matter how foolish.”

G.K. Chesterton

5. Inventing a god to take the place of the true God is what the Bible calls *idolatry*; and we are all very good at it! One of the most famous quotes from the great Protestant Reformer John Calvin nails it...

“The human heart is an idol factory. Every one of us, from his mother’s womb, is an expert in inventing idols.”

John Calvin

6. We all taught in school that “Nature abhors a vacuum”

- Open a vacuum packed can of peanuts and air rushes in
- Out of gas? Create a vacuum in a siphon tube and gas flows into it
- Empty a glass of water and air fills the empty space

7. So it is with the human heart; if the real God is not present, the heart will “manufacture” another god to fill up His place.

a. When a person puts anything in place of the real God, the Bible calls it “idolatry”; and it’s a danger to believers and non-believers alike.

8. To win the War of the Worldviews, Christians need to be able to confront the culture with its idolatry.

“Idolatry is the most discussed problem in the Bible and one of the most powerful spiritual and intellectual concepts in the Believer’s arsenal.”

Os Guinness, No God But God

9. This is what happened when Paul came to the city of Athens in Acts 17, a city renowned to for its statesmen, philosophers, historians, poets, painters, and architects. It was the very center of the heathen world.

Now as Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him as he saw that the city was full of idols.

Acts 17:16 ESV

- a. Historians tell us that there were more than 30,000 idols in the city of Athens!
- b. So Paul went to the very center of the idols at the Aereopagus, or Mars Hill...

B. Confronting the Culture: The Apostle Paul on Mars Hill

And Paul stood in the midst of the Aereopagus and said, ‘Men of Athens, I observe that you are very religious in all respects...’

Acts 17:22

- 1. The Greek religion had dozens of gods and thousands of idols that proved they were very “religious”.

...for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription:

TO THE UNKNOWN GOD.

Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you...

Acts 17:23-24

- 2. These religious Greeks constructed idols to all their gods; then, fearing they had left one out, built an altar “TO THE UNKNOWN GOD”.
- 3. The god they had left out was the real God! And this is the God that WE have been sent forth to proclaim!
- 4. We need to know that every man has to have a god; if He has not got the real One, his heart will manufacture one!
- 5. All men are religious!

“When man forgets God, he adopts some other principle and makes it the god of his life.”

Gary DeMar

II. The Biblical Worldview of Idolatry: In the World and in the Church

A. In the World: Fallen Man Has a God-Shaped Hole

“There is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of every man which cannot be filled by any created thing, but only by God, the Creator, made known through Jesus.”
Blaise Pascal

1. All men are religious because all men believe *something!*

2. Testimony: It is sad to say that over the years I have seen many people “walk away” from God:

a. Some have a tragedy hit their lives and they can no longer believe in a God who would allow such a thing to happen to them

b. Some have a bitter experience with the Church or with people in the church and walk away

c. But no one ever tells them that the human heart can never walk away from the true God without putting another “god” in His place.

“The abandonment of God is never complete or comprehensive. When the God of scripture is abandoned, an idol is substituted, usually some man-made philosophy.”

Herbert Schlossberg, Idols for Destruction

d. I saw a survey recently that said 6 out of 10 of the young people who attended Christian Church youth groups in High School walk away from Christianity during their college years! But you cannot walk away from a Christian philosophy of life without putting another philosophy in its place! They become socialists, or humanists, or _____ (fill in the blank).

3. The human heart, unless it is filled with God, becomes an “idol factory”; and it happens so automatically we don’t even realize it. And this can happen to nations!

“Western society, in turning away from the Christian faith, has turned to other things. But it turns away from the worship of God while ignoring the fact that something is being turned to in its place.”

Herbert Schlossberg, Idols for Destruction

4. A nation without the true God will slip into “pluralism”: a condition in which 2 or more principles or authorities coexist. A modern Athens. Very religious. A city full of idols. And the result is...CONFUSION.

“Modern man has two feet firmly planted in midair.”

Francis Schaeffer

5. The human heart demands a “god”; it is shopping for a “god”; if it does not have the true God, it will manufacture one. And that is idolatry.

B. Idolatry in Israel

1. It is easy to identify idolatry in the world and overlook the fact that it’s also always been a problem for God’s people!

2. Consider the 1st commandment God gave to His people Israel:

“Thou shalt have no other gods before Me.”

Exodus 20:3

a. The God who says this knows that He is the only true God; so when He speaks of “other gods”, He is speaking of idols.

3. The 2nd commandment is ever more specific:

"You shall not make for yourself an idol..."

Exodus 20:4

a. Tragic to read that even as God is giving this commandment to Moses in the Mount, His people are constructing a golden calf to worship!

b. Notice that an idol is something we make for ourself.

4. Idolatry was an ongoing issue with Israel:

"Has a nation changed gods when they were not gods? But My people have exchanged their glory for that which does not profit.

Jeremiah 2:11

a. It is possible to “exchange” the real God for a false god.

b. Here’s another verse from the Prophet:

**"For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me,
The fountain of living waters, to hew for themselves cisterns,
Broken cisterns that can hold no water.
Jeremiah 2:13**

c. This proves our point: if we “forsake” the true God, the “fountain of living waters”, we will immediately “hew” out a new “god”, or “cisterns”; but all our new “gods” are “broken”; they can “hold no water”

5. The Old Testament proves idolatry was a problem in Israel. But it is also a New Testament problem.

C. The Problem of Idolatry in the Church

1. Old Testament idolatry usually involved physical idols or statues. But New Testament idolatry is almost always of a spiritual nature. (I don’t know of any Christians who have idols in their homes.)

2. Spiritual idolatry is much more subtle; almost sneaky. Pastor Tim Keller comments:

**“The human heart is an idol factory that takes good things like a successful career, love, material possessions, even family, and turns them into ultimate things. Our hearts deify them as the center of our lives, because we think they can give us significance, safety and security if we can attain them.”
Tim Keller**

3. Look at this statement:

a. Our heart can be an “idol factory” even after we are saved!

b. Idolatry is subtle: We take “good” things and turn them into “ultimate” things!

4. I was a Christian for 16 years before I became a Pastor. And I never really understood New Testament idolatry until I entered the ministry.

a. On a personal level:

- I realized how easy it was for me to slip into making an idol of the ministry!
- 1700 pastors leave the ministry each month! Most often to save their families.
- The ministry is toxic to families-keeping priorities right is a challenge

b. On a pastoral level:

- I have seen men who put their work ahead of the things of God
- Young people worship entertainment
- Some men worship sports
- Some men worship their wives (Don't laugh-consider King Solomon)

**For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods....
1 Kings 11:4**

- Some parents worship their children

4. No wonder some of the last words of the great Apostle John are these:

**My little children, keep yourself from idols.
1 John 5:21**

III. Conclusion

A. What We Have Said

- **The human race is wired for God; man is religious by nature**
- **The human being is “shopping for a god”; and it will have one**
- **The human heart is “idol factory”-if it does not have the true God, it will create one on its own**
- **Idolatry occurs whenever we replace the true God with a God of our own making**

1. The War of the Worldviews is a clash between the Kingdom of God and the kingdoms of this world; in one, God is on the throne; in the other, an idol is on the throne.

2. We can't wage war with idolatrous worldviews until our own house is clean.

a. How do I know if I have an idol?

“An idol is anything you have to check with before you say ‘Yes’ to God.”

Kris Vallotton

- This is a simple gut check: “What am not doing that I know I should be doing?” (Tithing; faithful to church; spending time with my family) Then ask yourself: “Why am I not doing it?” or “What’s holding me back”? The answer to that question is an idol in your life.

b. If I have an idol what do I do about it?

“Jesus must become more beautiful to your imagination, more attractive to your heart, than your idol. That is what will replace your counterfeit gods.”

Pastor Tim Keller

3. So dealing with idolatry is not a negative matter of getting rid of something, because something else will slip into its place. Dealing with idolatry is a positive decision to put God on the throne and keep Him there!

CLOSING PRAYER AND INVITATION

“Thou hast made us for Thyself, O God, and our hearts are restless until they rest in Thee.”

Saint Augustine