

# **THE WORKS OF THE FLESH**

## **"IDOLATRY" AND "SORCERY"**

### **INTRODUCTION:**

Falsehood or deceit is repugnant to God. Of the seven things God hates, two directly deal with lying (Prov.6:16-19). Such abomination is at the root of idolatry and sorcery or witchcraft (Isa. 44:20, Jer. 27:9-10, Rev. 18:23). While one honors a false god in idolatry, he wields a false impression in sorcery. Both involve rejecting God and replacing Him with our own creation and consequent false experiences.

### **I. WHAT "IDOLATRY" MEANS**

- A. EIDOLOATRIA - Noun; Occurs 4 times in the N.T., and refers to the worship and service of false gods. Translated idolatry or idolatries (I Cor. 10:14, Gal. 5:20, Col. 3:5, I Pet. 4:3).
  
- B. Related Terms:
  - 1. EIDOLON - Noun; Occurs 11 times in the N.T. and means an image or representation of an idea or fancy (I Cor. 8:4, Acts 15:20, 2 Cor. 6:16, Rev. 9:20, etc.).
  - 2. EIDOLOLATRES - Noun; Occurs 7 times in the N.T. and denotes a hireling or servant of the false image or idol. Translated "idolater" (I Cor. 5:10, 6:9, 10:7, Rev. 21:8, etc.)
  - 3. EIDOLOTHUTOS - Adjective; Occurs 10 times in the N.T. and signifies "things sacrificed to idols" (Acts 15:29, 21:25, ICor. 8:1, 4, 7, 10, etc.).

### **II. CHARACTERISTICS OF "IDOLATRY"**

- A. Reflects the things men consider very important to his existence...
  - 1. The power of life and fertility: Baal and Ashtoreth - male and female counterparts of Canaanite deities.
  - 2. The growing seasons for food - Tammuz (Ezek. 8:14). According to tradition, Tammuz was a "beautiful shepherd slain by a boar (the symbol of winter) and Ishtar (Babylonian goddess of fertility - corresponds to the Greek's Aphrodite) mourned for him and descended into the underworld to deliver him from the embrace of death." (ISBE, Vol. V. Page 2908).
  
- B. Deceitful in that it has the outward resemblance to truth.
  - 1. Like God, Idolatry has its house for the gods (I Sam. 5:5).
  - 2. Like God, Idolatry has its priests (Jer. 49:3, 2 Chron. 11:15).
  - 3. Like God, Idolatry has its sacrifices (Deut. 32:17).

- C. False in that it involves worshipping creation, instead of the Creator. (Rom. 1:21-23, 25; 2 Kings 23:5; Ex. 32, cf. Acts 7:41-43).
  - 1. The reason why God has not allowed man to see His image (Deut. 4:15-19; 2 Kings 18:4).
  - 2. Encourages trust in things which depend upon God's power for its existence (Isa. 44:12-20).
  
- D. Disappointing because it causes one to become powerless and vain as his god (Psm. 115:8, 135:18).
  
- E. Degrading because it lead to more lawlessness and variety of vices (Rom. 1:24-25, I Pet. 4:3, 2 Kings 17:16-17).
  
- F. Man's attitude toward things can become Idolatry..
  - 1. "Desire to have more" - covetousness (Col. 3:5, Eph. 5:5).
  - 2. Offering our devotion to things rather than God.
  - 3. The Proper Attitude:
    - a) Worship God and enjoy his creation, instead of worshipping created things (Deut. 4:19).
    - b) Turn from idols, and serve living God (I Thess. 1:9).
    - c) Flee idolatry (I Cor. 10:14).
    - d) Be on guard against idols (I Jn. 5:21).
  
- G. The end of all idolaters: Separated from the tree of life while eternally suffering in the lake of fire (Rev. 22:15, 21:8).

### **III. WHAT "SORCERY" MEANS**

- A. PHARMAKIA - Noun; Occurs 3 times in the N.T. and signifies the use or misuse of drugs in one's practice of the magical arts. Translated "witchcraft" or "sorceries" (Gal. 5:20, Rev. 9:21, 18:23).
  
- B. PHARMAKOS - Adjective; Occurs 1 time in the N.T. and means "devoted to magical arts". One who uses drugs in potions, spells and enchantments. (Rev. 21:8).

### **IV. CHARACTERISTICS OF "SORCERY"**

A. In the Old Testament it is connected with magical superhuman matters:

## **"IDOLATRY" AND "SORCERY"**

**PAGE 3**

1. Duet. 18:10: Divination (foretelling future by various signs, a general term); Augury (foretelling future by the signs of lightning and thunder, birds, etc.); Enchanter (divines by signs and uses mutterings, spells, etc. to interpret the times); Sorcerer (use of drugs to cast potions); Charmer ( deals in spells to achieve some desired result ) Consulter with a familiar spirit (asks a spirit which is usually within himself about the future); Wizard (wise in the mysterious); Necromancer (calls up the dead).
2. Lies cannot save (Jer. 27:9, Isa. 47:12-13).

B. Involves the misuse of drugs to seek a religious experience. "The Gk. Mantis worked himself into a state of frenzy, thought to imply inspiration, by music and certain drugs" (ISBE, Vol. 1. page 332).

C. A practice that rejects God and promotes self with superhuman powers (Isa. 47:9,12; 8:19-20).

D. Works deception and loss of inheritance in the kingdom of God (Rev. 18:13, Gal. 5:20-21).

### DISCUSSION:

1. What determines something becoming an idol? What are our 20th. century idols?
2. Is there anything sinful in consulting fortune tellers, psychics, or the dead ?
3. What are people practicing when they turn to drugs for a magical experience? Is it not sinful if the experience is not connected with religion?