

Statism is Idolatry
A Sermon by Pastor John Weaver

"And God spake all these words, saying, I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before Me." Exodus 20:1-3.

At II Kings 17:1-20:

"In the twelfth year of Ahaz king of Judah began Hoshea the son of Elah to reign in Samaria over Israel nine years.

And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, but not as the kings of Israel that were before him.

Against him came up Shalmaneser king of Assyria; and Hoshea became his servant, and gave him presents [tribute].

And the king of Assyria found conspiracy in Hoshea: for he had sent messengers to So king of Egypt, and brought no present to the king of Assyria, as he had done year by year: therefore the king of Assyria shut him up, and bound him in prison.

Then the king of Assyria came up throughout all the land, and went up to Samaria, and besieged it three years.

In the ninth year of Hoshea the king of Assyria took Samaria, and carried Israel away into Assyria, and placed them in Halah and in Habor by the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes.

For so it was, that the children of Israel had sinned against the LORD their God, which had brought them up out of the land of Egypt, from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and had feared other gods,

And walked in the statutes of the heathen, whom the LORD cast out from before the children of Israel, which they had made.

And the children of Israel did secretly those things that were not right against the LORD their God, and they built them high places in all their cities, from the tower of the watchmen to the fenced city.

And they set them up images and groves in every high hill, and under every green tree:

And there they burnt incense in all the high places, as did the heathen whom the LORD carried away before them; and wrought wicked things to provoke the LORD to anger:

For they served idols, whereof the LORD had said unto them, 'Ye shall not do this thing.'

Yet the LORD testified against Israel, and against Judah, by all the prophets, and by all the seers, saying, 'Turn ye from your evil ways, and keep My commandments and My statutes, according to the law which I commanded your fathers, which I sent to you by My servants the prophets.'

Notwithstanding they would not hear, but hardened their necks, like to the neck of their fathers, that did not believe in the LORD their God.

And they rejected His statutes, and His covenant that He made with their fathers, and His testimonies which He testified against them; and they followed vanity, and became vain, and went after the heathen that were round about them, concerning whom the LORD had charged them, that they should not do like them.

And they left all the commandments of the LORD their God, and made them molten images even two calves, and made a grove, and worshiped all the host of heaven [sun, moon, and stars], and served Baal.

And they caused their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire, and used divination and enchantments, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke Him to anger.

Therefore the LORD was very angry with Israel, and removed them out of His sight: there was none left but the tribe of Judah only.

Also Judah kept not the commandments of the LORD their God, but walked in the statutes of of Israel which they made.

And the LORD rejected all the seed of Israel, and afflicted them, and delivered them into the hand of spoilers, until He had cast them out of His sight.

For He rent Israel from the house of David; and they made Jeroboam the son of Nebat king: and Jeroboam drove Israel from following the LORD, and made them sin a great sin.

For the children of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did; they departed not from them;

Until the LORD removed Israel out of His sight, as He had said by all His servants the prophets. So was Israel carried away out of their own land to Assyria unto this day."

Idolatry is plainly and obviously forbidden in the Scriptures. The problem that you and I have today with idolatry is our limited concept of idolatry. If you just simply mention the word 'idolatry,' most people automatically think of individuals who bow down to idols, who bow down to graven stones and images. And certainly bowing down to graven stones and images is a part of and an aspect of idolatry, but that is certainly not the whole of idolatry. In fact, we usually forget the fact that the word 'image' comes from the word 'imagination' and before someone can ever build an image, he has to imagine that thing in his mind and then he has to build it with his hands.

So, idolatry not only covers literal things, such as idols or graven images, but it also covers concepts in our mind. In the Bible, you often find idolatry spoken of in a limited sense, but more

than likely, you find it in its broad, general sense. The reason you and I like to think of idolatry in its limited sense--that is, bowing down before some graven stone or graven image--is because we do not like to think of ourselves as idolaters.

May I ask you this question. And I want you to think seriously about it. Are you an idolater?

You say, "Well, I don't bow down before graven images." That's not what I asked you.

Take the following very seriously. For, that which I have to say is extremely important in light of our day and in light of our times.

We're talking about idolatry. At Ephesians 5:5, the Apostle Paul says, *"For this you know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God."*

Now, I want you to note, that Paul said, that a whoremonger; that an unclean man; that a covetous man; is an idolater. So, fornicators and adulterous individuals, are idolaters. But also, covetous individuals.

At Colossians 3:5, once again, it is spelled out very plainly. Here, the LORD says, *"Mortify therefore your members [that is, subdue them], which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry."* That means if I covet Brother Henry's wife, I am an idolater. If I covet his children, I am an idolater. If I covet his automobile, I am an idolater.

Covetousness is idolatry. In other words, idolatry is not given in the Bible just in a limited sense, the way we normally think of it; it's in a very broad sense.

Idolatry involves any and every attempt by man to be guided by his own word, rather than the Law Word of God. Anytime you replace God's Word with your word, you are an idolater. Anytime you replace God's Law with your law, you are an idolater.

If I was to turn to Genesis, chapter 3, and read there the description of 'the fall,' you would see very plainly that Adam and Eve traded God for Satan, they traded Truth for a lie, they traded Righteousness for sinfulness. And we can see very clearly that they were unfaithful to God, and unfaithful to the Charge of God, and we can charge Adam and Eve with the sin of idolatry. And that would be a correct charge.

But may I point out the fact, that modern day men and women who stubbornly and rebelliously substitute their own will for God's Will, their own words for God's Word and man's law for God's Law, are equally idolaters.

The basic question for the Christian is this. 'What is treason?' You say, 'but Pastor, you've been talking about idolatry. What in the world does treason have to do with idolatry?' A great deal. What is treason? Is treason unfaithfulness to the State. Or is treason unfaithfulness to God?

I want you to think about something with me. Whenever we use the word 'treason,' we normally think of it in terms of the State or in terms of civil government. But treason to the State, is the concept that has been used down through the ages to destroy the Godly.

Do you remember all of the Christians who were put to death in the Roman Empire? They were not put to death because they were Christians. In Rome, you could believe anything you wanted to believe, just as long as you swore by the genius of Caesar; just as long as you said, 'Caesar is Lord.' Christians were put to death not because they were Christians, but because they were called traitors and treasonous individuals, because they would not swear allegiance to the State.

All down through history, Christians have been put to death because they said, 'Jesus Christ is Lord.' For the Christian, it is idolatry, which above all else, constitutes treason to the social order. We know, and we believe, that God is True and His Word is True. Disobedience and unfaithfulness to God is idolatry; it is treason.

Did you know that the United States Constitution defines treason? In fact, Article 3, section 3, says this: "Treason against the United States shall consist only in levying war against them or adhering to their enemies, giving them aid and comfort." Who is the 'them and their'? The states or the people?

What if the enemy of the people and the Christian turns out to be the State; turns traitor against The Law of God--and against its own Constitution? If we as Christians obey the State, or if we obey any government--when that government is guilty of idolatry, and guilty of going contrary to the Word of God, and we obey the government that tells us to go contrary to the Word of God--we become idolaters. And we become partakers with its sin and its punishment.

There is a concept that is around in this country; it's been around down through the ages. It's the concept of Statism. Statism is the idea, that the State or the government is always right. And that the State or government can do no wrong. It was Hegel who said, "The State is God, walking on the earth."

I want you to know that that concept is idolatry, pure and simple. Because it ascribes to man--it ascribes to civil government the Perfections, the Righteousness and the Justice, that belongs to God alone. And anyone that says, "the government can do no wrong or the government is always right," is saying in essence, "government takes the place of God."

God alone, is always Right. God alone, can never do anything unjust and unkind. And so, that particular idea, is idolatry. Government can be an idol just as much as anything else.

In fact, throughout the Bible, it was usually civil government that led in idolatry. You know, that was a shock to me, when I realized that. And I want to go back and trace it down. I want to challenge you to do this. It would be interesting to study the Word of God and search the Scriptures, and find out which idolatries came into existence under which king.

Did you know that the worship of Moleck came into Israel under King Solomon and also, several other idolatries? At I Kings 11:4:

"For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father.

For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites.

And Solomon did evil in the sight of the LORD, and went not fully after the LORD, as did David his father.

Then did Solomon build an high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the hill that is before Jerusalem, and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon.

And likewise did he for all his strange wives, which burnt incense and sacrificed unto their gods.

And the LORD was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the LORD God of Israel, which had appeared unto him twice."

Note that the worship of Molech came in under Solomon.

Now, at I Kings 12:26, we find another civil ruler, Jeroboam, who introduces idolatry:

"And Jeroboam said in his heart, Now shall the kingdom return to the house of David:

If this people go up to do sacrifice in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, then shall the heart of this people turn again unto their lord, even unto Rehoboam king of Judah, and they shall kill me, and go again to Rehoboam king of Judah.

Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.

And he set the one in Bethel, and the other put he in Dan.

And this thing became a sin: for the people went to worship before the one, even unto Dan.

And he made an house of high places, and made priests of the lowest of the people, which were not of the sons of Levi.

And Jeroboam ordained a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, like unto the feast that is in Judah, and he offered upon the alter. So did he in Bethel, sacrificing unto the calves that he had made: and he placed in Bethel the priests of the high places which he had made.

So he offered upon the alter which he had made in Bethel the fifteenth day of the eighth month, even in the month which he had devised of his own heart; and ordained a feast unto the children of Israel: and he offered upon the alter, and burnt incense."

And again, we find civil government's introduction of idolatry at II Kings 21:1:

"Manasseh was twelve years old when he began to reign, and reigned fifty and five years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Hephzibah.

And he did that which is evil in the sight of the LORD, after the abomination of the heathen, whom the LORD cast out before the children of Israel.

For he built up again the high places which Hezekiah his father had destroyed; and he reared up alters for Baal, and made a grove, as did Ahab king of Israel; and worshiped all the host of heaven, and served them."

Now, every verse so far, points out that it was the civil leaders who were introducing idolatry into the land.

Why are governments prone to introducing idolatry into the land? Several reasons:

Firstly, because government deals with law. Law is inherently religious. All law is religious. Behind every law, is a moral judgment. Behind every law is a value judgment. And your values and your morals are based upon your theology. It is based upon your religion.

Law may be Christian or it may be pagan, but it is still religious. The reason we have the laws in our country, that we have today, are because of the false religions that our leaders have; and that we the people, who elect them, have.

And by the way, how many lawgivers are there? Only One. There is one God; there is one King; there is one Lawgiver.

In reality, governments do not have to make laws; they just need to enforce God's Law, because His Law is sufficient.

But whenever you begin to make laws, you're going to make a law which is in line with your theology and in line with your religious motivation, whether it's pagan or Christian. The first reason governments are prone to idolatry is because they deal with law. And instead of enforcing God's Law, they make their own law.

Secondly, because it's the nature of government to perpetuate itself. Just as Jeroboam introduced idolatry to Israel, because he was afraid they were going to go back to Rehoboam. So Jeroboam said, 'it is too much for you to go down to Judah to worship, where the tabernacle is, where the true altar is, so I'm going to make some golden calves and I'm going to ordain a feast the way they had it, and I'm going to make some priests--their not Levites--but I'm going to make some priests and we're going to have our own religion.' You see, Jeroboam introduced idolatry into the land to perpetuate his own office; to keep his position. Have you ever known of a politician who did not want to be re-elected? Have you ever known of a political party that did not want to stay in power? And, have you ever known of either one of them who were not willing to do any thing to keep themselves in power?

John 11:47 proves exactly what I am saying:

"Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation."

They were in power, and they wanted to stay in power. And they were willing to crucify the Son of God to stay in power.

Now, the reason governments have the propensity to idolatry, is not only because it deals with the law, and it's the nature of government to perpetuate itself, but also:

Thirdly, because government is power. Government is authority. And corrupt, depraved men, instead of exercising dominion over God's Creation, and trying to have dominion over that, want to exercise dominion over men.

What did Satan have to say to Adam and Eve?: 'you shall be as God.' Who has control over men? God does. Well, if we are our own gods or if we think we're some type of god, then we're going to have to exercise some control over men in order to prove it. So governments, then, are prone to idolatry. It's interesting that it was Solomon that introduced Molech worship. He also built an altar for Astarte worship. It's interesting that he did that as well. Astarte was the goddess of sex, or love; a lot of prostitution was involved in the worship of Astarte.

Now, Molech worship is a power religion. It is a political religion. There was no king in Israel that had the power that Solomon had. Solomon knew power. In fact, Solomon ruled from the river Euphrates, all the way to the sea. He ruled the whole of The Promised Land which God had given. No other king had done that before or after. So Solomon knew what power was.

You see, Molech worship is the worship of the State. The word 'Molech' means, 'king or kingship.' Molech worship is the concept of divine kingship. We know it in our time as, 'the divine right of kings.' And, do you know that that concept went out the window just a few hundred years ago? Do you realize that Europe still had kings that ruled as God? Their word was absolute law. The king could do no wrong. They ruled in the place of God. Molech worship was a power manifested in the political order. It was a political religion. And the king became identified with God to the degree that manifested absolute power. Thus, the Molech state, as the Molech king, claimed total jurisdiction over man. That's where we get the term, 'Statism.' That's where we get the term, 'totalitarianism.' It's a claim of total and absolute jurisdiction.

The Molech state-- the false pagan idolatrous governments of our day--claim unlimited jurisdiction. They claim unlimited control over man and the world. The Molech state claims jurisdiction from the cradle to the grave. Or as one man says, 'from the womb to the tomb.' Over welfare, education, worship, family, business, farming--you name it, they claim control of it. And if you don't believe that is true in our land today, try to enter into any of that without a license or certificate and you'll find out. The government claims absolute jurisdiction and control.

This past year, a Pastor friend of mine, W. N. Otwell--in Dallas, Texas--he and his church were concerned about the street people. There were a lot of people in Dallas who were going into the garbage cans and getting the food out and eating it. Now, I don't know about you, but I've always viewed that as being rather unhealthy, as well as unappetizing. Well, they got convicted about all of these people, so his church got together, and every Sunday they would bring sandwiches and other foods like that, and they would bring enough for themselves and enough for 2 or 3 others. And after church, they would go out and find these street people who were eating out of the garbage cans and share their lunches with them, and witness to them while they were doing so. And it got to the point where they were feeding hundreds of people each Sunday. And do you know, that the city came to them and told them that they could not do that without a license? Their food had not been inspected. Their food was not approved. They did not have a Health Certificate.

Pastor Otwell said to them, "you mean to tell me that I can't make a sandwich in my home and bring it down here and share it with a man, without having a license or certificate?" They said, "that's exactly right." He said, "let me ask you a question. What if I take all of these sandwiches and just throw them in the garbage can? I make them at home, I throw them in the garbage can and turn around and walk off. And these folks come out and dig it out of the garbage can and eat it. Do I have to have a license for that?" "No, you don't have to have a license for that." So, the next Sunday, he had several garbage cans on the sidewalk full of junk which said 'city food' and then over here he had 'church food.'

That's the Molech state.

Read Romans 13. Did you know that the State or government is not only called power and ordinance in Romans 13? There are two words that are very, very pointed. Twice, the government is called, 'the minister of God.' The word 'minister,' twice, is 'deaconos.' That's where we get our English word, 'deacon.' Government is to be the 'deacon of God.' Secondly, the word 'liturgos' is used, when it's called 'minister.' That's where we get our English word, 'liturgy.' A public worship. Government is to be God's liturgy, it is to be God's public worship. It is to serve God. It is to carry out God's commands. Government was given to us, according to Romans 13, for our protection, for our promotion. Not for a welfare state. The Word of God does not give the State the power or the authority to go beyond The Word of God.

Now, listen to me. To ascribe power, authority, reverence, submission, or anything else to the State--above The Word of God--is idolatry.

The State does not have 'infinite wisdom.' Only God has Infinite Wisdom. It is idolatry to talk about our government and our lawmakers as having infinite wisdom. You see, we are not to fear other gods. We are to fear The One True and The Living God, who is The LORD Jesus Christ. The reason why God punished and chastised Israel is found at II Kings 17:7; because they feared other gods.

Question. What does it mean 'to fear the LORD'? What does it mean 'to fear other gods'? When I talk about the fear of the LORD; and when the Bible says that 'the fear of the LORD is the beginning of all wisdom,' what does it mean? Well, when God talks about the fear of the LORD, He is not talking about a servile fear. He's not talking about a fear of punishment, a fear of wrath or a fear of hell. He's talking about a 'filial fear'; that is, a fatherly fear. A fear that is based upon the knowledge of God as Father. A reverential affection for God which results in loving submission and loving obedience to Him and His Word. Note what God says at Job 28:28:

"Behold, the fear of the LORD, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding."

Now, wisdom is the fear of the LORD and to depart from evil is understanding. There is the positive and the negative. And at Proverbs 1:7:

"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction." And at Proverbs 1:29:

"For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the LORD." If you don't fear God, you hate the knowledge of Him. Verse 30:

"They would have none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof."

The fear of the LORD, negatively speaking is, 'to depart from that which is wicked and sinful and contrary to God.' The fear of the LORD, positively speaking is, 'to obey God and His Law and His Statutes and to do that which is well pleasing in His sight.'

Let me put it to you in black and white. When you fear God, you keep His Word. You obey His Commandments.

When you fear a false god, you keep his law and his commandments. How do we know if a man fears a false god? He walks in the commandments and the statutes of the false god.

Now, what did the children of Israel do, to sin against God? One, they walked in idolatrous statutes and laws of the heathen god. Two, they walked in and kept the idolatrous laws of their kings, which they had made. In other words, they obeyed civil government when that government was against God and contrary to God.

The main question for Christians today is, 'what is treason'? Is treason against God or is treason against the State? For the Christian, it has to be against God. We have forgotten that idolatry and sin can come under the 'color of law.' Idolatry and sin can come under that which is 'right and just,' in the sense that it comes from civil government. At Psalm 94:20:

"Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with Thee, which frameth mischief by a law?"

A 'throne' speaks of rulership, power and authority. 'Mischief' means sin and transgression. 'The throne of iniquity' is that which makes sin legal by passing a law. God asks this question, "shall that wicked civil power which violates My Law and My Word have fellowship Me?" The answer is obviously, "no."

Beloved, I submit to you that it is idolatry to place any power; any authority; any statutes;-- above the Word of God. God only, is God. He alone is to be worshiped and feared.

I challenge you to read II Kings 22 and 23. The main chapter is 23, because Josiah becomes king, a Godly civil ruler, and starts cleaning house. One Godly ruler stands for God and casts out all of the previous idolatry.

The current government will pass one little law, and we say, 'that doesn't bother us,' until all of a sudden there's a strangle hold. Pastor Craig of Kentucky is in jail right now, charged with the 'crime' of 'preaching without a license.'

You see, we need to be perceptive enough to know that God's Truth is Supreme and that God alone is Sovereign. And we must obey God, rather than man. And when someone causes us to vacillate or when we are threatened with punishment and fines and this and that, the only question we must ask ourselves is this; What does God's Word say? And then we must obey God and take whatever man dishes out.

Our LORD said this, *"fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."* Matthew 10:28.

Our fear is to be of God alone.