

## Lesson 4

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# Worshiping Other Gods

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# Read

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The Avvites made Nibhaz and Tartak, and the Sepharvites burned their children in the fire as sacrifices to Adrammelek and Anammelek, the gods of Sepharvaim. They worshiped the LORD, but they also appointed all sorts of their own people to officiate for them as priests in the shrines at the high places. They worshiped the LORD, but they also served their own gods in accordance with the customs of the nations from which they had been brought.

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To this day they persist in their former practices. They neither worship the LORD nor adhere to the decrees and regulations, the laws and commands that the LORD gave the descendants of Jacob, whom he named Israel. When the LORD made a covenant with the Israelites, he commanded them: “Do not worship any other gods or bow down to them, serve them or sacrifice to them. But the LORD, who brought you up out of Egypt with mighty power and outstretched arm, is the one you must worship. To him you shall bow down and to him offer sacrifices. You must always be careful to keep the decrees and regulations, the laws and commands he wrote for you. Do not worship other gods. Do not forget the covenant I have made with you, and do not worship other gods. Rather, worship the LORD your God; it is he who will deliver you from the hand of all your enemies.”

They would not listen, however, but persisted in their former practices. Even while these people were worshiping the LORD, they were serving their idols. To this day their children and grandchildren continue to do as their ancestors did. (2 Kings 17:31–41, NIV)

*Twenty-first Century Idolators.* Like the ancient Israelites, today we people of God find ourselves in cultures where people worship a number of different gods. Certainly, many in non-Western nations chant and bow down to figures, carvings, or images. However, any number of things can be idols. We may not bow down to carvings of animals, but how much time do we spend staring at glowing screens? Is our highest allegiance to God or to our political party? Are we making moves to expand God's kingdom or build our own?

Idol worship is not about carvings. An idol doesn't even need to be a physical object. "Pride makes a god of self, covetousness makes a god of money, sensuality makes a god of the belly; whatever is esteemed or loved, feared or served, delighted in or depended on, more than God, that (whatever it is) we do in effect make a god of."<sup>1</sup> Anything that captures your attention and affection can become an idol.

Some will argue that they aren't the "worshiping" type. Human history does not support this conclusion. People tend to worship something or someone, even if they aren't consciously aware of it. People are incredibly creative in finding things to worship. The Greeks and Romans had pantheons of gods to worship. Some people worship money or their own self-image. When God gave the Israelites His commandments, it seemed almost a foregone conclusion that the people would worship something. The Lord makes it clear that He alone should be worshiped.

## Pray

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Heavenly Father, You are the great I AM, Jehovah God. You are the Almighty God, the One who is worthy, holy, and awesome. You are the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the Holy One of Israel. You are the first and the last, beside you there is no god. We put no one, no idol, no love, no thing before You. You are our first love, and we worship You, Lord of Hosts, Ancient of Days. In Jesus Christ, Amen.