

The God of the Bible by Hendrik Joubert

When one reads the simple description of idolatry as explained by the prophet **Isaiah (44:12-20)** it is difficult to understand how people could engage in such behavior. How could one consider the product of his own hands his god, more powerful than himself and able to bless and protect him? It may easily be dismissed as the action of a *primitive* and intellectually inferior individual. Many engage in similar behavior, only it is done on an intellectual level. One may create your own god by emphasizing (or accepting only) those characteristics of God which suit you, instead of allowing God to reveal Himself as He is. The final product, and the consequences are the same; you have created your own god with less effort than the person who physically shaped his god. Both are able to manipulate what his god requires in exchange for protection, or blessings.

We may also allow men to create our gods for us. Men who claim to have special communicating lines to God (often suggesting that the Bible has been tampered with) will bring us *new light*. Joseph Smith, Ellen G. White, Charles T. Russell, Oral Roberts, Billy Graham and many others have followed in the footsteps of those who first took it upon themselves to edit or change the message as revealed through His true messengers (**Jude 3-4**). The claims of some are more dramatic and drastic than others. They will reveal who God *really* is, or what it is He *really* requires of his servants.

Think about it for a moment; why do these *messengers from God* not *speak the same thing?* (**1 Corinthians 1:10**) Each group would vote for their man, or woman, listing evidence to prove that their individual is *anointed*, a *special messenger* to return the people to God. Some are more gracious and suggest that all ways lead to heaven – *we all worship the same God*.

Creating your own god in this way and deciding what is important (or not) is done *tastefully* (patronizingly) by *complimenting* God and emphasizing his love and grace at the expense of the responsibilities of one who would be pardoned. You decide the terms of salvation as you concentrate on the promises of God and ignoring those requirements you consider *meritorious* (tedious). Those who would suggest obedience to His will are accused of being legalistic and denying salvation by grace, however Jesus asks: **Why do you call Me, "Lord, Lord," and do not do what I say?** (**Luke 6:46**) Matthew records Him saying: **"Not everyone who says to Me, "Lord, Lord," will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter.** ²² **"Many will say to Me on that day, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?"** ²³ **"And then I will declare to them, "I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS."** (**Matthew 7:21-23**)

What does the Scriptures therefore teach us about God? It is through Paul that we are reminded to look at the good side as well as the punishing side of God: **Behold then the kindness and severity of God; to those who fell, severity,**

but to you, God's kindness, if you continue in His kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off. (Romans 11:22) Notice that men have to take the responsibility for what they receive. From his letter to the Galatians we learn: **Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. ⁸ For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. ⁹ Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary. (Galatians 6:7-9)**

It is James who explains in simple terms how faith expressed in *words only* is useless, it is dead. **(James 2:14-26)** It is the actions of obedience which make faith *complete* so that it will save. **(v. 22)** It is abundantly clear that the actions must make the faith alive *before* it can save. The gospel, based upon faith, is referred to as *the faith*. **(Jude 3)** The warning in this passage is for those who wish to follow the truth, to **contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints**. Paul describes the purpose of preaching the gospel as: **...to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for His name's sake,...** **(Romans 1:5)**

We should not allow men to create our god for us, or to tell us how to please Him. **All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; ¹⁷ so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)** Paul continues by exhorting Timothy to preach this word **For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, ⁴ and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths. 2 Timothy 4:3-4.**

The actions of these god makers have been prophesied. It is all too easy to condemn the physical god makers when we engage in the same action at an intellectual level.