

*A*polo*gia*: The First Commandment

By Ebencilin Mohan

Introduction

God gave the commandment to “worship Him alone” as the first since it teaches us to understand the foundation and source of our eternity and morality. As people living in a highly developed technological age with plenty of information and knowledge readily available, we are always looking for multiple options and tend to pick and choose things that fit our lifestyle or our dream. We live in a pluralistic, diverse, tolerant society and are often overwhelmed with all the different things that are in front of us. Yet God commands us to worship Him alone in spite of all the numerous gods available to choose from. He tells us that He is the only God worthy of our love and praise.

Scripture Connect

In Exodus 20:1-6, we read:

And God spoke all these words, saying,

“I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

“You shall have no other gods before me.

“You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.

Doctrinal Quotation

1. Worship the Creator NOT the created thing - “No carved images of anything in heaven or earth or sea”

The Israelites often forgot the living God when they mixed and married with other cultures like the Canaanites and worshipped false Gods like Baal, which are basically idols or carved images of a woman or man or bird or animal. So the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD. They forgot the LORD their God, and served the Baals and Asherahs (Judges 3:7)

God reveals to us through creation and His Word that He is the sovereign God. When people choose to ignore all the evidence and make up their own God, He punishes them or allows them to follow their way.

Romans 1: 18-25 says:

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

2. God or Mammon?

Modern youth or children who are raised at church and in Christian homes are not likely to worship crass idols made of wood or stone. Our idolatry is more subtle and it is hard to see. Satan, the master deceiver under sheep's clothing, leads us to other types of idolatry like mammon (another name for money, wealth or riches). We place our desires on money, athletic stars or movie stars or famous singers, material items, relationships and other pleasures before our pursuit of God. We should always be on guard against any "worldly" idolatry. May we always make our Lord first in our thoughts and desires.

Luke 16:13 says:

No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.

Isaiah 48:11 says:

*For my own sake, for my own sake, I do it,
for how should my name be profaned?
My glory I will not give to another.*

3. No other Gods?

We live in a pluralistic, tolerant Society. Is it fair to say that the other gods are false? Some people claim that a civil society is one in which all religions are equal and no religion can claim or insist that other gods or religions are false. This requires a serious study on "who our God is" and compare Him with another so-called god.

One example could be to understand Hinduism, which is the third largest religion in the world with 33 major gods and goddesses and thousands of other personal gods depending on the caste, region and family.

I have often heard or seen some of the Hindu sacrifices (animals, birds and even beyond), offerings (food, incense, gold, silver, money), rituals (bathing in the river Ganges to wash away sins), and Yoga that are required in Hinduism to attain salvation. (Though it is commonly considered a good form of exercise thing, it is truly a Hindu religious discipline to tap the spirit world. Yoga is the science of the individual consciousness attaining communion with the Ultimate Consciousness.) What a difference from Christianity!

For a Christian, Christ paid the penalty for our sins (1 Peter 2:24), redeemed us with His precious blood (Galatians 3:13,14), raised from the dead and triumphed over death (1 Corinthians 15: 50-56), made us righteous, reconciled us with God the father, intercedes for us, helps in our weakness and makes us live a transformed holy life (Hebrews 4:14-16) on our way to eternal Home.

While Jesus graciously shed His blood for us, even today so many people shed their blood to atone for their sins. (These practices are called Vel Kavadi, Paravai Kavadi in India.) God asks us just to believe in faith and accept him as Savior while He finished all the work on the cross of Calvary! It is totally fair to surrender my life to the only God who gave His life for me!

4. Bow down or worship just God.

We are no different from the early believers.

John, Jesus' disciple, fell at the feet of the angel who came to confirm the vision from God, but the angel told John only to worship God. Revelation 19:10:

Then I fell down at his feet to worship him, but he said to me, "You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God." For the

testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

Acts 14: 8-18 talks about the people of Lystra trying to worship Paul and Barnabas when they saw them performing miracles, and Paul and Barnabas admonished them to only worship God.

This is the same today. People tend to follow and worship individuals who excel in some form of art, music, sports or spirituality. Worship God alone!

5. Alpha, Omega, beginning and the End – Omnipotent, Omnipresent and Omniscient God!

“I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end,” Jesus says in Revelation 22: 13. The prophecies written centuries ago through different prophets are valid even today (Isaiah 48:4-11), some are fulfilled, and we look forward to our Savior’s second coming. That proves that our God existed even before the foundations of the earth were created and is the same forever and ever, which is not true of any idol. Because He lives, we can face tomorrow and in turn we should worship only God with all our soul, spirit, mind and strength!

Application

1. Proclaim that we worship Father, Son and Holy Spirit – Triune God – Three persons in one.
2. Pray and ask God to show if there is anything in your life that takes the place of God or takes priority over God. Take actions to recommit your life to God.
3. Pray for the “spirit of discernment” so that you would be able to identify the wolf in sheep’s clothing – Satan’s deceiving methods of deviating your soul to false practices.
4. Share your faith with your friends and gently explain the reason for your faith whenever there is an opportunity!