

Unit Title : **WORSHIPPING GOD**
Lesson 3b : **FORBIDDEN WORSHIP – IDOLATRY (GOD-MADE)**
Bible Story : **ISRAELITES & THE HEAVENLY BODIES**
Lesson Scripture : Deut. 4:15-20; Rom. 1:21-25; Deut. 5:8; Mat. 4:10

Main Emphasis : True worship is God-centered.

Objectives : By the end of this session, the students should be able to:

1. define idolatry;
2. acknowledge worship is to be addressed to God alone;
3. distinguish worship to the Creator and to His creation;
4. give examples of God's creation;
5. determine God is a jealous God;
6. determine disobedience to God's commandments is a sin and bears with it consequences;
7. assess their worship if God-centered;
8. recite the memory verse.

Words to Remember:

IDOLATRY – worship of idols; extreme admiration, love, or reverence for something or someone.

HEAVENLY BODIES – naturally visible in the sky, such as a **star**, planet, natural satellite, asteroid, comet, the **Moon** or the **Sun**.

Memory Verse:

Psalm 100

¹ Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth.

² Worship the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful songs.

³ Know that the Lord is God. It is He who made us, and we are His; we are His people, the sheep of His pasture.

⁴ Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name.

Pre-Session Activity: Presentation (video or pictures) of how wonderful God's creation are. (Sun, moon and stars should be at the end for retention)

Lesson Proper :

Recap: What is the greatest commandment? How do we worship God?

EXODUS 20:3-6 | DEUT. 5:8

(Let the students read it in English NIV and in Filipino Mabuting Balita)

The book of Deuteronomy was given to remind them of God's law and God's power. The first three chapters recap the trip from Egypt to their current location, Moab. Chapter 4 is a call to obedience, to be faithful to the God who was faithful to them. Chapters 5 through 26 are a repetition of the law.

The observation of the stars in the East very early led the people to regard the planets and the fixed stars as gods. The religion of the ancient Egyptians is known to have consisted preeminently of sun-worship.

Moses sternly warned the Israelites against worshiping the sun, moon, stars, and all the host of heaven, it may be said that the prohibition of making and worshiping any image of that which is in heaven above implies also the stars and

the other celestial bodies. The people of Israel were, however, corrupted by sun worship. They, of all people, had no excuse because the LORD specifically commanded them to not worship the sun, moon or stars because it is idolatry, no different than that religious statues or images. Deut. 4:25-29 showed some foreshadowing of the Babylonian Exile due to their idol worship.

Simple obedience brings blessing, and sin has its own consequences. None of us is "above the law." Even Moses, the leader and prophet chosen by God, was required to obey. The reason that he was not allowed to enter the Promised Land was that he disobeyed the Lord's clear command (Numbers 20:13). Only Joshua and Caleb, at the time where they are the only spies who reported a good report, were the only ones, other than those aged below 20, have entered the promised land for their faith (Heb. 11:1).

God is a spirit (John 4:24), and we cannot form an image of a spirit. We worship God by believing His Word, obeying it, and declaring His greatness to others.

Life Application :

God wants a God-centered worship for He is a jealous God. This is a holy jealousy for no one can worship two masters (Matt. 4:10; 6:24). Disobedience to God's commandments is a sin. Those who worship the creation rather than the Creator lack faith just like what happened to those spies who reported a bad report.

In Rom. 1:25, people tend to worship God's creation rather than Him, the Creator. Though His creation, the mountains, seas, animals and heavenly bodies are His creation should remind us of Him, how great and powerful He is.

We worship God alone in spirit and in truth so our worship to God should not be physical, but spiritual. Worshipping God's creation is not spiritual for such possess physical form making it a physical worship. A spiritual worship requires faith for our worship should be pleasing to Him.

Deut. 5:8 considers those who keep His commandment. It means we must make a stand to obey His commandments in spite of what others say, do or practice.

In Rom. 1:21, even though you know God, come to church regularly, pray, read the Bible, etc. still you might not worship and glorify Him with you heart. There are times your worship is meaningless though you know a lot about God and the scriptures. You tend to worship more not the Creator but other than Him. Man always has something or someone to worship, the question is what or who is it. Try to assess your worship if it is God-centered or not.

Evaluation :

- 1. What do you mean by idolatry?**
- 2. What is book of Deuteronomy, as a whole, all about?**
- 3. What are the examples of idol worship relating to God's creation?**
- 4. What commandment is violated when you worship idols?**
- 5. What is God's response to idolatry? How come?**
- 6. How do you define true worship? How is your worship? (Expand the question based on actual situations and instances)**

Background of the Lesson (For Teachers):

Sun Worship In Israel

by Wayne Blank

"Lest thou lift up thine eyes unto heaven, and when thou seest the sun, and the moon, and the stars, even all the host of heaven, shouldest be driven to worship them"

Many regard "sun worship" to be merely what ancient "heathen" people did. Some others realize however that many of those idolatrous practices were adopted as state religions by great empires. Babylon and Rome are the most-familiar, primarily because of their "sun god" e.g. Sol Invictus of the Church of the Roman Empire (now known as the Church of Rome, or the Roman Catholic Church), which was the basis for both their choosing of December 25 for "Christmas" (the Romans celebrated the winter solstice on that date long before the birth of Christ) and their "Sun Day" that is also observed by most of the "protestant" churches (see the Fact Finder question below). Even the portrayal of the "halo" (a natural phenomenon of the sun that pagans used as part of their idolizing of the sun and themselves) is merely the sun behind the head of a "saint."

The people of Israel were however also corrupted by sun worship. They, of all people, had no excuse because the LORD (i.e. Jesus Christ; see The Kingdom Of The LORD God) specifically commanded them to not worship the sun, moon or stars because it is idolatry, no different that religious statues or images.

(DEUTERONOMY 4:15-20 KJV)

Worship of the sun was a death-penalty offense i.e. "hath gone and served other gods, and worshipped them, either the sun, or moon, or any of the host of heaven, which I have not commanded ... even that man or that woman, and shalt stone them with stones, till they die."

(DEUTERONOMY 17:2-7 KJV)

Some of the kings of Israel and Judah (see Israel In History and Prophecy: Israel and Judah) attempted to reverse the idolatry, which included sun worship, of the nation. King Josiah (see Josiah of Judah) was one of the few righteous kings who cleansed the land of such idolatry.

(2 KINGS 23:4-7 KJV)

Nevertheless, many of the kings of Israel and Judah made themselves and their kingdom

incurable sun worshipers. There is a prophecy about them that will be fulfilled after the return of the Messiah.

(JEREMIAH 8:1-3 KJV)

"With their backs toward the Temple of the LORD, and their faces toward the east; and they worshipped the sun toward the east"

The primary reason that the original Temple of the LORD was destroyed, by the LORD, was because the people had turned it into a place of idolatry, including, as documented in the verses below, sun worship. Amazingly, the illustration shows the very same sort of idolatry in a 6th century Synagogue in Israel.

Sun Worship In Israel

(EZEKIEL 8:1-18 KJV)

STAR-WORSHIP

By: Executive Committee of the Editorial Board., M. Seligsohn

This is perhaps the oldest form of idolatry practised by the ancients. According to Wisdom xiii. 2, the observation of the stars in the East very early led the people to regard the planets and the fixed stars as gods. The religion of the ancient Egyptians is known to have consisted preeminently of sun-worship. Moses sternly warned the Israelites against worshipping the sun, moon, stars, and all the host of heaven (Deut. iv. 19, xvii. 3); it may be said that the prohibition of making and worshipping any image of that which is in heaven above (Ex. xx. 4; Deut. v. 8) implies also the stars and the other celestial bodies. The Israelites fell into this kind of idolatry, and as early as the time of Amos they had the images of Siccuth and Chiun, "the stars of their god" (Amos v. 26, R. V.); the latter name is generally supposed to denote the planet Saturn. That the kingdom of Israel fell earlier than that of Judah is stated (II Kings xvii. 16) to have been due, among other causes, to its worshipping the host of heaven. But the kingdom of Judah in its later period seems to have out-done the Northern Kingdom in star-worship. Of Manasseh it is related that he built altars to all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of Yhwh, and it seems that it was the practise of even kings before him to appoint priests who offered sacrifices to the sun, the moon, the planets, and all the host of heaven. Altars for star-worship were built on the

roofs of the houses, and horses and chariots were dedicated to the worship of the sun (ib. xxi. 5; xxiii. 4-5, 11-12). Star-worship continued in Judah until the eighteenth year of Josiah's reign (621 B.C.), when the king took measures to abolish all kinds of idolatry (ib.). But although star-worship was then abolished as a public cult, it was practised privately by individuals, who worshiped the heavenly bodies, and poured out libations to them on the roofs of their houses (Zeph. i. 5; Jer. viii. 2, xix. 13). Jeremiah (vii. 18) describes the worship of the queen of heaven to have been more particularly common among the women. Ezekiel, who prophesied in the sixth year of the captivity of Jehoiachin (591 B.C.), describes the worship of the sun as practised in the court of the Temple (Ezek. viii. 16 et seq.), and from Jer. xlv. 17 et seq. it may be seen that even after the destruction of the Temple the women insisted on continuing to worship the queen of heaven. In Job (xxxi. 26 et seq.) there is an allusion to the kissing of the hand in the adoration of the moon (see Moon, Biblical Data). According to Robertson Smith ("The Religion of the Semites," p. 127, note 3, Edinburgh, 1889), star-worship is not of great antiquity among the Semites in general, nor among the Hebrews in particular, for the latter adopted this form of idolatry only under the influence of the Assyrians. But Fritz Hommel ("Der Gestirndienst der Alten Araber," Munich, 1901) expresses the opposite opinion. He points to the fact that the Hebrew root which denotes the verb "to swear" is the same as that which denotes "seven," and claims that this fact establishes a connection between swearing and the seven planets; and he furthermore declares that there are many Biblical evidences of star-worship among the ancient Hebrews. Thus, the fact that Terah, Abraham's father, had lived first at Ur of the Chaldees, and that later he settled at Haran (Gen. xi. 31), two cities known from Assyrian inscriptions as places of moon-worship, shows that Abraham's parents were addicted to that form of idolatry. According to legend, Abraham himself worshiped the sun, moon, and the stars before he recognized the true God in Yhwh (see Abraham in Apocryphal and Rabbinical Literature). The golden calf, Hommel declares, was nothing more than an emblem of the moon-god, which, in the Assyrian inscription, is styled "the youthful and mighty bull" and the lord of the heavenly hosts (comp. "Yhwh Zeba'ot," which term is intentionally omitted from the Pentateuch). He assigns the same character to the two calves made by Jeroboam several centuries later (I Kings xii. 28).

The ancient Hebrews, being nomads, like the Arabs favored the moon, while the Babylonians, who were an agricultural nation, preferred the sun. But, as appears from Ezek. xx. 7-8, the moon-worship of the Israelites, even while they were still in Egypt, was combined with sun-worship. The close similarity between the ancient Hebrews and the southern Arabs has led Hommel furthermore to find allusion to moon-worship in such Hebrew names as begin with "ab" (= "father"), as in "Abimelech" and "Absalom," or with "am" (= "uncle"), as in "Amminadab" and "Jeroboam," because these particles, when they appear in the names of southern Arabs, refer to the moon.

The term "star-worship" ("abodat kokabim u-mazzalot") in the Talmud and in post-Talmudic literature is chiefly a censor's emendation for "abodah zarah." In connection with star-worship, it is related in the Mishnah ('Ab. Zarah iv. 7) that the Rabbis ("zekenim") were asked if God dislikes idolatry why He did not destroy the idols. The Rabbis answered: "If the heathen worshiped only idols perhaps God would have destroyed the objects of their adoration, but they worship also the sun, the moon, the stars, and all the host of heaven, and God can not destroy the world on account of the heathen."

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Lesson 3b: FORBIDDEN WORSHIP - IDOLATRY (GOD-MADE)
Memory Verse: Psalm 100
Lesson Scripture: Exodus 32; Rom. 1:21-25; Exo. 20:3-6; Mat. 4:10

Reminders:

1. **Pre-Session activity:** Present a video or pictures of God's creation and how wonderful they are. Put the heavenly bodies at the end for retention to the story.
2. **Background lesson for Teachers:** Should not be included in the discussion of the lesson, but for the teacher's knowledge and thorough study about the story. Also, this part is to be discussed if a student ask the same.
3. **Discussion flow (story):** The book of Deuteronomy overview -> Chapter 4 - warning against worship of idols including the heavenly bodies -> Disobedience to the commandments has consequences -> Israelites, other than Joshua and Caleb, were not allowed to enter Canaan due to disobedience
4. Post-Session Activities will not be provided in the lesson plan, unless there's a need to. Activities after the discussion should be provided by the teacher in charge.
5. Please hit all the specific **Objectives** in the discussion - Intermediate/Junior High & Primary.
6. If you have any suggestion or input, please do tell.
7. Discussion to the students depends on the age-level of the class. Just simplify the lesson to maximize time and be creative in teaching.
8. Assistants in charge will do the pre-session activity and memory verse.
9. Be sensitive with the time in order not to miss out any activity.

Programme: Opening prayer/Greetings (3min) -> Pre-Session (5min) -> Lesson (15-20min) -> Snacks/Memory Verse (8min) -> Post-Session (5-8min)

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