

Cause of Estrangement

That I may take the house of Israel in their own heart, because they are all estranged from me through their idols.

Ezekiel 14:5

Though Christianity has liberated many cultures and people from the bondage of paganism, idol worship is still prevalent in our modern world. The days of human sacrifices to false deities have ended, but you can still find places where other forms of sacrifices are made to manmade images. Not only does idol worship subject its adherents to some harmful practices, but it also alienates people from a relationship with the one and only true God.

In the Old Testament, the chief sin of God's chosen people was idolatry. Having no other gods, and not making any graven image was at the forefront of the Commandments. Though Israel experienced times of revival, idol worship would eventually resurface causing estrangement from Jehovah. Israel's decline became so great that they adopted the practices of the surrounding pagan cultures. Failing to heed God's warnings sent by His prophets, the nation Israel consequently fell into captivity by invading nations. Eventually returning to their Promised Land, their spiritual blindness continued to alienate them from a right relationship with God. Rejecting their Messiah, their estrangement will continue until the future time when they will repent and turn to Him.

The lifesaving message of Christ crucified has brought multitudes out from the darkness of false beliefs to the liberating light of the truth. Seeing through the fallacy of man-made images and false deities, believers should be wary of other types of idolatry that can subtly creep into their lives. The first epistle of John, which was written to believers, concludes with this warning "little children, keep yourselves from idols". This first-century warning is not only speaking to the infant church, but also God's children today.

When a time of estrangement comes upon us, could it be that we have allowed some undetected form of idolatry into our life? It need not be some graven image; it can be a person, an activity, our agenda, or our self-will. When we give priority to the wrong things in our life, we can crowd out the fullness of God's presence. As believers, may we quickly detect any decline in our relationship with our Heavenly Father through the Holy Spirit. If some form of idolatry is revealed, may we be ready and willing to allow the grace of God to give us the power to cast away the idol and return to having sweet fellowship with our loving Lord.

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