# *Perspective*

*By L. Jim Tuck*

***October 31, 2026***

## Modern Day Idolatry

Most people in this modern fast-paced world would think there is no idolatry, especially in Christianity. It is obvious the second commandment teaches, *"You shall not make for yourself a carved image—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 nor serve them. For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God..."* (Exodus 20:4-5). The very idea a Christian would worship a stick or stone idol is ludicrous! God is a Spirit, and He seeks those who worship Him in spirit and truth (John 4:24). And yet, God would not have made this a part of the Decalogue if it were not something man would have to guard against. Jeremiah 10:1-5 describes a custom done in billions of professing Christian homes. They cut a tree and fastening it to make it upright, and putting silver and gold tinsel on it. It is a form of idol worship today. And yet, Jesus Christ has nothing to do with it. It reminds us of the woman at the well who told Christ (John 4:20): *"Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship."* In verses 21-22, *"Jesus said to her, 'Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews.'"*

**Do you know what you worship?**

The fact is, often even those who believe they are careful to serve God are caught up and blinded by practices and traditions which do not serve to worship the true God in heaven. Revelation 12:9 says that Satan has deceived the whole world.

Even in Jesus' day, the scribes and Pharisees were teaching traditions which rejected God: *"'And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men—the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other such things you do.' He said to them, 'All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition'"* (Mark 7:7-9).

They were not obeying God, but their own manmade traditions, which became a form of idolatry. Often in ancient Israel the kings, like Jeroboam, led the people into idolatry.

King Jeroboam, after the split of the nation into Judah in the South and Samaria or Israel in the North, set up His own altar and priesthood (II Chronicles 11:15). He moved the Feast of Tabernacles to the 8th month to keep the people away from Jerusalem who kept the feast in the 7th month. He made two golden calves — one placed in Bethel and the other in Dan — and presented them as gods who had brought Israel out of Egypt. Jeroboam built shrines on high places and appointed priests from "every class of people" who were not Levites as the Torah commanded. These practices became entrenched: II Kings 17:21–23 notes that the people of Israel *"walked in all the sins of Jeroboam"* until God removed them by the Assyrian captivity.

Even though Jeroboam made significant changes in what they practiced in the Northern Kingdom, the biblical record shows that Jeroboam I, the first king of Israel in Samaria, explicitly used the name of Yahweh in his religious reforms, but used it in a way that diverted worship away from Jerusalem. Today in the name of Christ the same thing occurs.

Queen Jezebel, pagan wife of Israel's King Ahab and archenemy of Elijah, was driven by an almost demonic zeal for Baal. She filled the land with false worship. 1 Kings 16:31–33 records that Ahab *"took as wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians… and went and served Baal, and worshiped him. He reared up an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he had built in Samaria."*

The text explicitly links Jezebel's influence to this act, describing her as the one who "stirred up" Ahab to serve Baal. Elijah, in his confrontation with the prophets of Baal at Mt. Carmel, challenged the people: *"How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him"* (I Kings 18:21).

The apostle Paul tells us that whenever people sacrifice to idols, they are actually sacrificing to demons (1 Corinthians 10:19–20). Demonic activity is not limited to dramatic displays of possession. Paul warned Christians about doctrines of demons infiltrating the church (1 Timothy 4:1), and he said that Satan could disguise himself as an angel of light (II Corinthians 11:11–14).

**Time has a way of clouding minds to the truth**

An idol doesn't necessarily have to be just made into a physical graven image. It can be anything that we place above Almighty God or before what He has commanded. Ezekiel warned the elders of Israel that although, technically, they might not have had any idols, they had set up *"idols in their heart"* (Ezekiel 14:3-4, 7).

There is no doubt people have been deceived about what is truth. People don't generally know history well enough, and that plays to the advantage of Satan to deceive. George Santayana, the Spanish-American philosopher, once wrote in 1905: "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."

The Hebrew Scriptures explicitly forbid the worship of celestial bodies, including the sun; for example, people don't remember the origins of the customs of Easter. Most would be shocked to know these customs are in history, and are condemned in Deuteronomy 4:19: *"And beware not to lift up your eyes to heaven and see the sun and the moon and the stars, all the host of heaven, and be drawn away and worship them and serve them…"*

The prophet Ezekiel condemned the priests at the Temple in Jerusalem for this forbidden practice: "*So He brought me into the inner court of the Lord's house; and there, at the door of the temple of the Lord, between the porch and the altar, were about twenty-five men with their backs toward the temple of the Lord and their faces toward the east, and they were worshiping the sun toward the east."* (Ezekiel 8:16)

**Passover verses Easter**

And yet today, Christians rise early on Sunday morning to see the sun as it rises in the East as part of their worship service on Easter. None of the apostles ever kept Easter, but rather they observed the New Testament Passover instituted by Jesus the night of His betrayal. In I Corinthians 11:23-26 the apostle Paul wrote, "*For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.' In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.' For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes".*

The early church was instructed to proclaim the death of Christ, and it was never commanded to celebrate His resurrection! In the early 2nd century, there was a dispute over the date of the Christian "Pascha" (Passover) celebration. Many churches in Asia Minor, including Smyrna where Polycarp was bishop, continued the Jewish Passover tradition of celebrating on the 14th day of the month of Nisan — the date Jesus was crucified according to the Gospels. This was the "Quartodeciman" practice, meaning "fourteenth," and was taught by the apostle John, whom Polycarp was a direct disciple. The account of the *Quartodeciman Controver*sy is found in Eusebius of Caesarea's Historia Ecclesiastica (Book 3, chapters 23–25).

Polycarp met Anicetus, Bishop of Rome, around 155 A.D. to discuss this and other issues. Anicetus's church celebrated Pascha on the Lord's Day (Sunday). Following the tradition of Peter and Paul, Polycarp insisted on keeping the Passover on Nisan 14, saying that John and the other apostles had taught this, and that Jesus himself had suffered on that day. He refused to abandon the tradition, even though Anicetus could not persuade him otherwise. Early church historians, such as Irenaeus, record that Polycarp "neither could Anicetus persuade Polycarp to forego the observance… nor could Polycarp persuade Anicetus to keep the observance in his way. Polycrates of Ephesus, a later successor in the same tradition, confirmed that 'we scrupulously observe the exact day (14th of Nisan), neither adding nor taking away.'"

Polycarp refused to keep Easter as it was later defined at the Council of Nicaea in 325 AD.

**Worship of God has no room for compromise**

Elijah confronted the ancient Israelites who had turned to idolatry, and the priests of Baal: *"How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him"*

Jeremiah the prophet wrote: *"For the customs of the people are vain."* (Jeremiah 10:3) *Adam Clarke Commentary* elucidates this verse: "the statutes and principles of the science are vain, empty, and illusory. They are founded in nonsense, ignorance, idolatry, and folly."

Adam Clarke well noted that even their science is vain and like an idol to them. Paul speaks of the wise of this world in Romans 1:21-23: *"Because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools…"*

It is our desire to serve God in the manner He has instructed. We don't lift up manmade traditions or ideas of this world which negate or reject God and what He has commanded in the Bible. There is no room for compromise in the worship of God—if one believes God is God—then follow Him!