

Call to Obedience #395
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God and God Alone

By Reimar Schultze

“I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me.” (Exodus 20:2-3)

This means that you shall not have any other gods beside, before or instead of the God who brought Israel out of Egypt. It means the God of Israel is the only true God: “I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside me...” (Isaiah 45:5).

What Gives God the Right to Say This?

Here are two good reasons:

1. The God of Israel is the creator and sustainer of all things; all energy and life proceed from Him: “He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heavens by his discretion” (Jeremiah 10:12). “For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, ...all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist” (Colossians 1:16-17).

If God were to cease His existence, the whole universe would fly apart. All life is from God. Simply stated, we are because God is.

Because all things came out of Him, and because we were created and sustained by Him, He owns us and our hearts should unceasingly do obeisance before Him. Since we are His offspring, we need to dwell in Him, and He, in turn, takes pleasure by dwelling in us. We in Him and He in us is the essence of Christianity (John 15:4; 1 John 4:13-16).

2. God has credentials! Anybody who claims to be somebody needs credentials to prove their claim is true. When God gave the Ten Commandments, He reminded His people of the credentials He displayed when He brought them out of slavery in Egypt. He delivered them from Pharaoh through ten impressive miracles (Exodus 7-12). Then He opened the sea for them to walk through on dry ground. Credentials! Then He went with them into the wilderness and fed them with bread from the sky and gave them water out of a rock. He led them by day with a cloud and at night with a pillar of fire. Credentials!

At Mount Sinai, God introduced His commandments to them by reminding them that He is not a bondage-maker but a bondage-breaker. He prefaces His

commandments by saying: “I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage” (Exodus 20:2).

Is it any wonder, then, that the Jews make this preface of deliverance their First Commandment? The Jews embraced these commandments as a roadway to freedom, delivering them from their enemies and from their own ways by their undivided allegiance to God. They received these laws as a gift of love. They received these laws as a bride receives the most exquisite bouquet of roses from her lover giving us expressions like this: “Unless thy law had been my delights, I should then have perished in mine affliction” (Psalm 119:92). “O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day” (Psalm 119:97).

The Apostle Paul, a devout Jew and a chief Apostle of Christ, puts it this way: “Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good” (Romans 7:12).

Let us now look at specific instances of God’s interactions with man to confirm His magnificent and benevolent nature toward His people:

- Israel had a God who communicated with His people (Genesis 12:1).
- Israel had a God who made a way for them to pass through the Red Sea (Exodus 14:21-22) and the Jordan River (Joshua 3:14-17) on dry ground.
- Israel had a God who sheltered them from the sun (Exodus 13:21), provided bread from the sky (Exodus 16:4) and water from a rock (Exodus 17:3-7).
- Israel had a God who cured lepers (Numbers 12:11-15).
- Israel had a God who noticed the tears of a distraught woman and spared her from losing her son (Genesis 21:16-19).
- Israel has a God who can heal a broken heart (Isaiah 61:1).
- Israel has a God who can forgive sins and remove them as far as the east is from the west (Psalm 103:12).
- Israel’s God promised to give them a new heart and put a right spirit within them (Ezekiel 36:26).

God has credentials!

This Is the God Israel Experienced; This Is Also Our God.

Biblical scholars have described the attributes of God by saying “God is” as follows: Sovereign, All-sufficient, Immense, Infinite, All-knowing, All-powerful, Perfect, Immutable, Incomprehensible, Transcendent, Impartial, All-pervasive, Loving, Merciful, Long-suffering, Gracious, Holy, Righteous, Just, and an Avenger of the wicked.

All of these attributes are everlasting and essential for God to be God. Truly there is none like our God causing the psalmist to say: “...O LORD my God, thou art very great; thou art clothed with honour and majesty. Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment: who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain: Who layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters: who maketh the clouds his chariot: who walketh upon the wings of the wind” (Psalm 104:1-3).

How Do We Recognize that Something Has Become a god to Us?

If there is any one thing in our life that takes precedence over our loving, listening to and following Jesus, we are in idolatry. Every time Israel left her God, she always returned to idolatry. Every generation and culture has their gods. We live in a dangerous world of idolatry. Nearly everyone Jesus met was an idolater. Let us look at what forms of idolatry Jesus encountered during His earthly visitation.

MONEY was a god to the rich young ruler who came to Jesus to be saved. When Jesus asked him to give it up, the young man refused (Matthew 19:22).

Jesus asked some people to follow Him, but their PLANS were their gods. One wanted to bury his father first (Matthew 8:21-22). Yet another used his wedding as an excuse for not following Jesus when called (Luke 14:20).

To some Pharisees and Scribes, TRADITION was their god. Jesus said that while following their traditions, they neglected the commandments of God (Mark 7:5-9).

To others, FAMILY was a god. Jesus told a large crowd that unless they would love Him more than family, they could not be His disciples (Luke 14:26). Then Jesus gave a new definition of family by saying: "For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother" (Matthew 12:50). We cease to be God's children if we allow family pressures to take us from our Lord's plans.

To some, FINANCIAL SECURITY was their god (Luke 12:16-22). Our security is to be in seeking first the kingdom of God and He will take care of everything else (Matthew 6:33).

RELIGIOUS COMMITMENTS can become a god to us, causing us to neglect the needy about us (Luke 10:30-33).

To many people of high social status and education, PLEASING MAN was their god (John 12:42-43). They did not join themselves to Jesus for fear of being put out of the synagogue (John 9:22).

These were some of the gods with which Jesus had to contend. Again, He lived in a world of idolatry. These gods are still with us today. Here are some newer ones: sports, golfing, television, education, fashion or a job. Whatever awakens our greatest interest and is more important to us than God, is taking us into idolatry.

Here Are Three Checks that Reveal if We Have Another god in Our Lives.

For this, we must look at our bank account, at the use of our time, at the energy, direction and intensity of our passions.

If we have other gods, we violate the law of love. If we do not love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength, we fall short of being Christians. We are pretenders and hypocrites. We are in idolatry which excludes us from the kingdom of God. This means banishment to an eternal hell for all "...idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death" (Revelation 21:8). God will not tolerate rivals or competing loves. "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." If we keep this one directive, we will be well on our way to keeping all the others. If we do not start here, there is no other place for us to start.

Either we are all for God, or we are not for God at all.

(This is an edited excerpt from *The Law and You* by Reimar A.C. Schultze)

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