

Lecture 25 – Overview of Deism (concluded); Overview of Idolatry

“I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then for the Gentile. For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from the first to the last, just as it is written: ‘The righteous will live by faith.’”
Romans 1:16-17

Key Terms

Idolatry; God’s revelation; inexcusability; wisdom & folly; rational, emotional, volitional needs; promises & rewards

Objectives

- *Describe the nature of idolatry and its attractiveness.
- *Recognize idolatry in our contemporary culture.
- *Identify ways in which God in Scripture responds to idolatry.

Overview of Deism (concluded)

Potential bridges for communicating with deists

E. Problems with deism

1. Issue of comparative religions
 - a. Superficial understanding of the main religions
 - b. Little understanding of their deep differences
2. Human reason as source of truth and knowledge
 - a. Leads to skepticism and uncertainty
 - b. Ignores human finitude and sinfulness
3. Who is God?
 - a. The deist makes his own God.
 - a. But God defines Himself, not man.
4. Who are we?
 - a. Deism has no foundation for affirming human dignity.
5. What is good conduct?
 - a. Deism has no foundation for moral certainty.

Wrap-up on communication with unbelievers: (*not in lecture*)

1. Pray - that God will soften their hearts, open their minds. Recognize that we have rebellious hearts too.
2. Live the truth - the quality of your life speaks clearly. If not doing the truth then shut up. Our life has tremendous power.
3. Courage to declare the truth - need to keep going, to press on. It often takes time.

Overview of Idolatry

I. Understanding idolatry, “the home of the unbelieving heart”

A. Romans 1:18-2:16 – Paul deals with idolatry first (later, with Christ).

1. God has revealed himself to all humanity.
 - a. God’s eternal power
 - b. God’s divine nature
 - c. God’s moral nature
2. People have no excuse for not worshipping God.
 - a. Most believe in God.
 - b. Those who don’t constantly fight against God.
 - c. Problem isn’t ignorance but willful suppression of truth

- d. Refusal to give thanks
- 3. Every culture claims their own wisdom.
 - a. Their thinking is empty.
 - b. Their hearts are foolish.
- 4. The folly of idolatry
 - a. Worship of actual idols
 - b. Worship of part of creation directly
 - c. Worship of humanity
- 5. Moral consequences of idolatry
 - a. Breakdown of family / sexual morality
 - b. Every other type of sin also
 - c. Any element of truth will constrain immorality

II. How idolatry works today

- A. All people are religious, have religious needs.
 - 1. Rational need
 - 2. Emotional need
 - 3. Volitional need
- B. How these needs are met in our culture
 - 1. The rational need
 - a. God is creator but not provider or ruler.
 - b. God is unknown.
 - c. God isn't the judge.
 - d. God for times of crisis
 - e. Some attend worship services.
 - f. All religions are the same.
 - g. No word from God
 - 2. The emotional need
 - a. New Age religion and spirituality
 - b. Human relationships
 - c. Sexual pleasure
 - d. The arts
 - e. Sports
 - 3. The volitional need
 - a. Religion, particularly the cults
 - b. A political cause
 - c. Work
 - d. Wealth
 - e. Pleasure and self-fulfillment

Who or what do we worship?

III. Idolatry: promises and rewards

- A. Empty promises
 - 1. Why is idolatry attractive? Isaiah 44:19-20
 - a. We are divided from ourselves.
 - b. Divided loyalty – we don't want God to intrude.
 - c. We choose, create our idol.
 - d. Idolatry doesn't require humbling oneself before God.
 - 2. What rewards do idols give?
 - a. Temporary rewards and pleasures
 - b. Illusion of control; increasing demands
 - c. Ultimate loss of control

d. Spiritual bondage

(The following points are not covered on the CD lectures)

3. The Bible deals with idolatry primarily by contrast: declaring the glory of God over against the shame and emptiness of idolatry. This is the central message of Isaiah 40-48.
 - a. God is worthy of worship. He is full of glory. Consider His character, His works, His acts of redemption. Consider His love for us. Yes, He makes demands that we bow before Him, but we owe our life to Him both as creator and redeemer. He gave Himself for us. No idol has sacrificed itself for you.
 - b. God does ask us to live no longer for ourselves, but for Him. We, indeed, are asked to lose our lives, to humbly acknowledge His authority, and to live for Him. But He asks us to do so freely and gladly, from the heart, in response to His love.
 - c. As we obey His commandments we find that we are set free. In losing ourselves we find ourselves. His law is a law of liberty. I gain the freedom to enjoy relationships, to have increasing control over my own life. What He asks from me, He gives back.
 - d. He gives us all His good gifts to richly enjoy (1 Timothy 6:17-19).
 - e. We become like the one we worship. As we follow Him we are changed into His likeness—from one degree of glory to another (2 Corinthians 3:17-18).