

From the very beginning of our relationship with God, He has warned us¹ not to localize our idea of Him into something physical that we think is capable of representing Him. He is the Supreme Creator of mankind and the universe that we live in, and nothing can adequately describe or contain Him².

Man has this tendency, however, to create something himself that he can call God. Remember Aaron when he fashioned the golden calf out of the people's gold, saying, "These are your gods, Israel, who brought you out of Egypt³." This same expression was echoed by Jereboam when he made two golden calves⁴; he did this in an effort to keep the people of the northern split of the kingdom who wanted to worship in the Jerusalem temple from deserting to the south. This temple, which God allowed Solomon to build⁵ so that His Name (not His being) could reside there, had also become a sacred physical item⁶. There were other examples of misuse, too, such as the bronze snake Nehushtan that Moses made⁷ and the ephod that Gideon had made of gold that the people had given him⁸. People were meant to grow out of this very limiting concept as the kingdom matured. But the inability of men to be able to perceive God in a spiritual way, inside their heads and hearts, even now continues to be a problem.

The debate about localizing God was illustrated best when Jesus met with the Samaritan woman at the well⁹. The great question that concerned her was, which mountain was the correct one in which one could properly worship God; which location actually pinned down the transcendent God? Jesus responded that in the new kingdom, one could worship anywhere if they truly understood the true nature of the omnipresent Creator God.

The prophet Isaiah revealed the senselessness of a created being that would make something and then treat it as a god capable of miraculously saving him. He gave the example of someone who cut down a tree and then used half of the fuel to warm himself and cook his food¹⁰. But then he also fashioned a god and worshiped it, making an idol and bowing down to it and worshiping it praying, "Save me! You are my god!"

The ark of the covenant was considered this type of magical talisman when Eli's sons carried it into battle against the Philistines¹¹, but this proved to be a great error. It did not give the sinful Israelites a military victory, but it caused the Philistines defeat in a different way, as their god Dagon could not stay on his feet in its presence¹². The Philistines sent the ark back, ironically accompanied by graven images of the rats¹³ that were part of the health problems that they attributed to the Israelites' God.

In a similar way, when Gideon tore down the altar to Baal and burned it and the poles dedicated to Asherah, his father showed that if Baal was really a god with power, he could defend himself from such attacks¹⁴. This showed a great understanding of the complete powerlessness of man-made gods.

So, the idea of man infusing a creation with a god is a meaningless concept. God, though, essentially did a similar thing when he infused a part of His creation with His Spirit¹⁵ (in Jesus Christ). God could do this because only He had this kind of power. Christ existed before that creation, but He came to earth in the body of a man, emptying Himself of power to provide a localized point for us to better see and understand the meaning of Love. Our true response is to prostrate our hearts in True Worship.

1. Deuteronomy 5:8-9

2. 1 Kings 8:27-30
3. Exodus 32:4
4. 1 Kings 12:28
5. 1 Kings 5:5
6. Jeremiah 7:4; Do not trust in deceptive words and say, “This is the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord!”
7. 2 Kings 18:4
8. Judges 8:27
9. John 4:19-20
10. Isaiah 44:9-20
11. 1 Samuel 4
12. 1 Samuel 5:1-7
13. 1 Samuel 6:4-5
14. Judges 6:31b
15. John 1 and Philippians 2:5-11

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