

**LESSON 184**

**Egermeier's Story:**

Page 540 – The Gospel Is Preached in Ephesus

**Memory Verse:** Romans 1:16a “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes....”NASB

**Scripture:** Acts 18:24-19:20

**Teaching Resource:**

Bible Study Guide for All Ages Lesson 335

**Doctrinal Emphasis:** The Occult and Idolatry

**Key Theme:** *When man worships things or creations instead of God, whether knowingly or through ignorance, the result is idolatry and occult practice.*

The Ephesians were involved in the worship of the creation rather than the Creator. In fact, the occult and idolatry permeated every aspect of life in Ephesus, from their religious practice to their commercial endeavors. The Ephesians worshipped the goddess Artemis, or Diana. She was a goddess of fertility as well as the Hellenistic goddess of forest and hills. She was the daughter of Zeus and Leto; this fact is significant for if one reads the accounts of these gods and goddesses, one finds that each was born of some other god and goddess or ultimately of some material object, such as the earth or the sky. This is one of the characteristics of the pantheon, in that none of the gods or goddesses were eternal. This is what separates them from Yahweh. He alone is eternal and sovereign.

The practice of idolatry has several dangers, the most significant of which follow.

1. Idolatry robs God of the glory and honor that is rightfully His (Isaiah 42:8).<sup>1</sup>
2. God is unique, and cannot be represented in physical form (Deuteronomy 4:15-19; John 4:24).
3. Idolatry violates the holiness that God expected of His people and is tantamount to adultery (Exodus 23:32-33, 34:15; Numbers 25:2-3).

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<sup>1</sup> Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology

4. Idols are powerless. They cannot save the adherent; they cannot cure ills or fix economic ruin; they cannot help in any way. They are lifeless and nothing. (Isaiah 45:20; Deuteronomy 32:28; Judges 10:14; Jeremiah 11:12; II Chronicles 25:15; Jeremiah 51:17-18; Psalm 106:28)
5. The unavoidable outcome of idolatry is destruction, death, and the judgment of God (Jonah 2:8).

Idolatry remained a problem for the New Testament church and Paul speaks in stern terms against it. He even tells believers not to have association with idolaters. Idolatry is a major theme of the Bible. It challenges God's sovereignty and attempts to offer an alternate explanation to the issues of life.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, we should take seriously the instructions and condemnation of this destructive practice.

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.