

Your God – Dead or Alive?

(Deut. 4:28)

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9/16/07

Note: The text below was prepared for oral delivery rather than for publication in print. As such, be aware that sentence fragments are intentionally used and that this document has not been edited to correct the errors in grammar, sentence structure, etc.

A. Introduction ó Announce text and title

1. Background ó Importance of the question, “Is your God, dead or alive” in light of:
 - a. “Alive” or “Living” is how the one true God is often distinguished in the Bible ó as “living,” i.e. ó alive and not dead
 - b. Quote Jn. 17:3 ó “...*the only true God.*”
 - (2) The Living God - 30 references of this phrase in the Bible ó often in the context of distinguishing the one true God from idols.
 - c. So repentance is called for ó that is, all are commanded to turn from their idols to serve the living God ó to repent from dead works and former idolatry.
 - (1) Heb. 9:14: *How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?*
 - (2) Acts 17:30 ó On Mars Hill, Paul told us that God calls upon men everywhere to repent
 - (3) In 1 Thess. 1, Paul speaks of knowing of their election and he describes as part of the evidence of this in vs. 9 of “... *how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God;*”

B. Dead Idols ó the product of sinful man’s own imagination ó Focus on Deut. 4:28 (Read vs 27-28)

1. Vs 28 ó Note that vs. 28 describes the gods as the work of man’s hands, literally made out of wood, and stone. But consider other descriptions in same chapter: (vss. 16, 17, 23, & 25)
2. (Turn to Deut 29). Beasts see, hear, eat, & smell but a likeness does not. All imagine their god to be real and alive ó otherwise they would not worship it. So it truly can be said of all that we initially worship a god who doesn’t see, hear, eat, nor smell ó though we imagined otherwise.
3. Idolatry in its reality is the worship of a dead and false god; however no idolater perceives it to be so. His presumption that his god lives is a figment of his or her imagination. See Deut. 29:18-19 ó “...*the imagination of mine heart*”
4. So all believe their god lives, until God is pleased to reveal otherwise and grant them the grace of repentance from their former idolatry. So today, I challenge you to examine whether your god is alive or dead, the true and living one of the Bible or one that only lives in your imagination, of your own devices or as you naturally assume him to be.

C. How do we Distinguish the true from the false?

1. Well, the entire testimony of God bears witness to God and it teaches us clearly that He is revealed in the Person and work of His Son. Christ Himself said (Matt 11:27b) that *ōí neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.*”
2. As prompted by Deut 4:28 ó consider this distinction in light of these faculties of life that are mentioned in this particular description of idols, particularly since in isolation, all would assume their god is alive and sees, hears, etc. (Read the verse).

D. (Be turning to Isa 53.) What does the true and living God see, hear, eat, and smell according to the Bible, the Word of truth? Weðl just consider a few.

1. Seeing ó What does God see? (Read Isa. 53:10-11):

The true and living God sees satisfaction in the offering Christ made on the cross ó justice satisfied. Is this true of your God? Not if any perished for whom Christ offered Himself. Not if anything else remained to be done for when He made His soul an offering ó He saw His seed. And those found in Him are unprovable & unblameable. Yet we all approach God imagining something we could and must do something that will make the difference in our own salvation ó í and that is the product of the imagination of our own, desperately wicked hearts that would rob God of His glory in Christ.

2. Hearing ó What does your god hear? (Be turning to Luke 18)

- a. He does hear. In scripture, it is often mentioned that God hears the prayers of those who call on His name. We often see this in God’s promise that whosoever will call on His name (that is as He is identified in Christ’s Person and work as the Lord our righteousness) shall be saved (and thereby we know that they were delivered at the cross) (Rom 10:13).
- b. But what does He hear? We’ve touched on it already in noting He hears those that call on His name (as identified). I believe that in the parable of the Pharisee and the publican, God clearly sets forth what He hears. There we see that God hears the cry for pure, unadulterated mercy.

(Read Lk 18:9-15) Comment on how òmercyö means propitiation ó the unmerited favor of God but based upon satisfaction having been made, salvation merited by another. What is your plea? Is your God one who shows mercy in the sacrifice of Christ and there alone or is your god more akin to that of the Pharisee in that you imagine salvation to be based upon something He enables you to do?

3. Eating ó Literally, God is Spirit, yet He describes Himself in ways we can relate to ó in hearing as if He has ears, in seeing as if He has eyes. So while God as Spirit doesn’t literally eat for sustenance as we do, let’s consider in what way the true and living God distinguishes Himself from imagined gods (idols) who do not eat.

D. 3. *Eating (Con't.):*

We might well consider that eating and drinking involves consuming that which is necessary for us. The scriptures use language in describing Christ's work that likewise suggests that He consumed that which was necessary in order for God to justly justify sinners.

- a. Heb 2:9 speaks of Christ tasting death.
- b. In Matt 26, Christ speaks of this cup that He must drink; speaking of the death He would die.
- c. So from the whole of scripture, we learn that Christ drank damnation dry as He consumed the very just wrath of God against sin on the cross. He completely digested it.

Well, is that true of your God? Was the wrath of God fully consumed by the doing and dying of the Lord Jesus Christ or is there something more to be done?

4. Smelling? Read Eph 5:2 ó God is satisfied / totally pleased with what took place at Calvary ó A sweet smelling savor (fragrance). God's glory is totally wrapped up in the satisfaction that was made at the cross of Calvary. How about your god? Does that describe Him?

E. Summary: (Turn back to Deut 4)

I hope you see the common thread that identifies the true and living God from the idols we're all commanded to turn from in faith and repentance.

1. Does your God see? ó The travail of His soul and find total and complete satisfaction there in His finished work?
2. Does your God hear? ó The plea of mercy to the exclusion of all else ó of desiring to be found in Christ based upon His righteousness alone, having the unmerited favor of God based upon a just satisfaction?
3. Does your God eat? ó Did the God-man fully consume the very wrath of God that was poured out on Him at the cross of Calvary so that all He represented must be declared righteous in Him ó not guilty?
4. Does your God smell? ó The sweet savor of the sacrifice Christ made that demands the life of all those whose sins He bore?

See how all of these life activities (or faculties of life) point to Christ and His finished work in satisfaction to the justice of God.

F. Closing

Consider Deut 4:29, and 31. Note in vs. 31, He is a merciful God, a covenant God. ó But remember that He shows mercy by way of satisfaction.

Thatø the God we have to do business with for itø by that righteousness we shall be judged. How about your god? Do these passages which distinguish the true and living God align with your own persuasion as to how He justifies sinners? I.e. ó is it based solely upon the satisfaction made by Christ on the cross?

Itø a vital question ó for we canø turn from idols to serve the true and living God until the one which õseemed rightö (Prov. 16:25) to our naturally evil hearts has been exposed. But how about now? Is the God you worship, your God ó dead or alive?

Footnote from the author: While this sermon was prepared and delivered by me, I often utilize the commentaries, study helps, and teachings of others to supplement my own prayerful study of the scriptures. Since this document was not originally prepared for publication in print, please excuse and recognize that it was unfeasible to properly identify and credit all of the various original sources used to develop the content herein. Ultimately, it is my sincere and foremost objective to accurately present the gospel of Godø's grace found in the only infallible source, Godø's word itself ó the Bible.

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