

## WORSHIPING THE LORD ALONE

Adapted from a family talk by Rt. Rev. George de Charms

A long, longtime ago, people who lived in the world were able to actually speak to the Lord and to see His angels. Adam and Eve heard the Lord's voice in the Garden of Eden. Abram spoke to Him in Ur of the Chaldees. Moses saw Him in the burning bush, and on the top of Mount Sinai. Ezekiel had a vision of Him on a throne in heaven.

But after Adam and Eve disobeyed the Lord and were driven out of the Garden of Eden, people began to turn away. They no longer loved the Lord nor sought to do His will. Then they began to make images of Him and bow down and worship these images.

At the time of Moses all people in the world worshiped images, or idols; some of stone and some of wood, some of silver and some of gold, in all kinds of forms, like those of people or animals. Many still knew that these idols were only pictures of the Lord. But others did not know this and had forgotten all about the Lord.

Then the Lord came to Moses on Mount Sinai, in a great cloud, and spoke with him, so that people would not forget the One who had made them and who cared for them, and who gave them all their life. And the first thing He said to Moses was:

*"I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself any carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them" (Exodus 20:2-5).*

Whenever the children of Israel thought of the Lord and worshiped Him, He gave them victory over their enemies. He caused manna to fall from heaven to feed them, and made water flow out of the rock so that they might drink. He gave them many cattle and sheep, clothing to wear, and houses in which to live, and everything they needed to make them happy. But when they made images of stone or silver or gold and worshiped them, then He would send a plague upon them, or cause their enemies to defeat them in battle, and they would be unhappy.

One example of the Children of Israel worshiping idols is when they made a golden calf and worshiped it, when Moses was actually up on Mount Sinai

talking with the Lord! The people wanted gods they could see, and they forgot about their promises to obey the Lord. But, of course, the image they made was not a god. It could not see or hear them. It could not help them. It was just a big piece of metal. Moses was very angry when he discovered that the people had disobeyed and worshiped an idol, and the people were punished. But sadly, they still disobeyed the Lord many times after this.

Finally, a time came when most of the Children of Israel no longer worshiped the Lord at all. And so they were carried away into captivity in Babylon, because they had turned away from the Lord their God. Some of the people were still faithful though, and we can read about them in the book of Daniel. Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego refused to worship a golden idol that the king of Babylon had made and ordered everyone to worship. They said they would worship only the Lord. The king had them thrown into a very hot furnace, but the Lord sent an angel who saved them from being hurt at all! But still, many of the people worshiped the golden idol and forgot about the Lord.

At last there was almost no one on earth who knew the Lord or loved Him. People could no longer hear His voice, or see His angels because they had turned away from the Lord. This meant that they would not be able to approach the Lord in the other world either and could never come into heaven where the angels all love and worship Him.

And so the Lord came down on earth Himself. He took on a human body, like that of any man, and in that body He lived among the people and taught them about Himself. There was great rejoicing with those who were able to see and know Him then. The shepherds, keeping watch over their flocks by night, came with exceeding great joy, to find Him in the manger and to worship Him. The Wise Men, from a far off land, followed the star until it led them to the house where the young child lay. And as He grew up to be a man, the disciples listened to His teaching and saw His miracles and came to love Him and adore Him as their God. Near the end of His life on earth, the Lord took Peter, James, and John up into a high mountain and opened their eyes so that they might see Him as the angels do in the other world. They beheld Him as a wondrous Divine Man, with clothing as white as snow and “His face shining as the sun.”

Now we cannot see the Lord while we are on this earth. Only after we die and come into heaven, will we be able to see Him as the disciples did on that mountain. But we can learn about Him from the Word, about how He lived on earth and what He did and said. And so we can form a picture of Him in our minds—not as a dead image of stone or wood, but as a living Man, clothed in garments of light. Because of this, we have no need of carved images or idols. We only need to think of Him as He is seen in heaven.

Think of Him in this way every night when you kneel down to say your prayers. Think of Him as One who loves us, who made the world for us to live in, and who gives us wonderful things every day to make us happy. Keep that living picture of Him in your mind as you pray, to thank Him for all that He has done. And thinking of Him in this way, resolve to keep the commandments of His Word to show your gratitude for all His love and mercy.

If we do this, then when we come into the other world, we will be able to see the Lord there, in all the glory of His Kingdom, and receive His blessing, and live among the angels.