

## ***NO GRAVEN IMAGES***

Pity the poor idol maker. It is his job to make an image worthy of worship. The statue alone can not inspire devotion, being too common and familiar, often even ugly. It is made of materials that come from the earth and will return there. So the poor soul does the only thing left to do. He layers the object with precious metals. Rare jewels are placed upon it in settings. The artistry of man adorns it so that all who look upon it will desire it. Those who desire such wealth will come to worship beneath it. Those who will not worship, will at least covet what is upon it. Either way, it is placed above the common. And the idol maker draws satisfaction from both responses.

We do much the same thing with those on this world we call royalty. For example, the Israelites felt left out because of all the nations around them, only they had not had the great fortune to have one of their ranks elevated to the position of king. They wanted a man to give their loyalty to, rather than Jehovah and His prophets. One with failings that did not make them feel so imperfect by comparison when they came into his presence. So they took Saul, proclaimed him king, put jewelry upon him, a royal robe, and a crown of precious metal, inlaid with jewels. Without that, you see, visitors would not have realized that they were supposed to respect him. His worth among men was derived from his crown. His eternal worth came from the anointing of God; but when the anointing was forfeited, the worth of the symbols became all too fleeting. He ruled briefly in the bitter knowledge that his successor had already been chosen and was waiting in the wings. We even carry on the traditions of the crown with its temporary worth today. Once a year, beauty queens are “crowned” with diadems, acknowledging that we worship, admire, or covet their earthly beauty. Implicit is the knowledge that whatever importance they assign to that crown had better be capitalized upon quickly, because in one more year, the crown will pass to another more worthy. Earthly honor is fleeting indeed.

Also interested in idols and kings were the grave robbers. They were immensely interested in those who wore such crowns, were bedecked in such jewels, or accumulated such wealth. They visited the graves of such men. Not to pay them homage, but to desecrate their bodies. If a ring was still upon their fingers, it was not gently removed. No reverence was given there. The only things considered to be of worth in the tomb were the jewels and the precious metals. The remains of the person were simply left to continue their decline toward the earthly materials they were made of. Knowing this, kings and rulers often arranged for their remains to be hidden, vanishing from the knowledge of men. The worth of this world with which they covered themselves, vanished with them. These bandits were also interested in idols. When they found hidden temples or abandoned shrines, they did not worship there, No, they stripped the idols of the only things that ever gave them value. Then also left them to decay.

The Bible says in 2 Peter 3:10 that everything on this earth will melt with a fervent heat. Which is why it also instructs us to lay up our treasure in heaven, where rust and the moth do not destroy. God knew that where a man's treasure is, there would his heart be also. He understood the value that precious metals and jewels would acquire in our eyes. He likened salvation to a great pearl that a man would sell everything he owned, just to buy and possess it. He compared our lives to vessels, which after being put to the tests of trials, would come from the fire as purified gold. He understood. He just did not agree. His version of treasure is His Spirit, contained in our earthen vessels, the only treasure transferable to eternity. This contempt for our value system is demonstrated by the fact that the most constant metal of value throughout time, gold, is the one He has chosen to have trod underfoot for all of eternity in the city that He has built. The largest of our precious jewels, pearls, will be microscopic in comparison to those found in His city .... as gates.

Pity the poor man or woman who faces themselves daily with a poor self image. It is their job to take what they see and give it worth. In their eyes, unadorned, they are incapable of inspiring either desire or respect. What they see is common and familiar, and often seems ugly. It is made of materials that come from the earth and will return back to it. So this wretched one does the only thing left to do. Objects of precious metals are put upon them. Rare jewels are placed in settings upon them. The artistry of man adorns them so that all who look upon them will desire them. Those who desire such wealth will come to worship them and exclaim over them. Those who will not worship, will at least covet what is upon them. Either places them above the common. Both are temporary and fleeting. The sad thing is when the grave robbers come. They may not wait for death, but rather, bring it.

With any investment, even in self worth, choices must be made. Our world proclaims that diamonds, with their artificial value, are a girl's best friend. God insists that He is. Man says that the more jewelry you put upon yourself, the more wealth you display, the more likely you are to be envied and respected, not to mention, possibly murdered. God commands us not to put any graven images before Him. What must He think when His Spirit looks through our eyes toward a mirror and sees an image, gilded in precious metals and jewels. Man promises that crowns of precious metals and royal clothing make you worthy of admiration and worship. God says that all crowns will be cast at the feet of the one who wore a crown of thorns and the robe of a servant. Through the ages, in the eyes of man, authority has been conveyed by a signet ring. God says to put on the name of Jesus, in which all authority now rests. Now, our world is saying that a ring through the nose is the thing to do. Do not be deceived. Just like with cattle, a nose ring simply means you are under the authority of cruel men, and easily led away captive.

When the captive children of Israel "spoiled" Egypt and left, coming out of a land which typified living in sin, they brought a lot of jewelry with them. Most of them did not choose to wear these objects, rather, they willingly gave them to Moses to make into vessels and ornamentation for the tabernacle. They traded objects, which signified the value system of the world, for the presence of God in their midst. They knew something we sometimes forget. God is coming back for a people set apart for His glory. He will know them, not by the flammable wealth they are wearing, but the heavenly treasure they have wrapped up within themselves, His Spirit, in earthen vessels. An eternal investment, protected with their very lives. It is this Spirit which will raise them from the earth to be with Him. Even those who may be dead in this world, yet were laid to sleep with the pearl of great price within them, they too, will rise to be with Him.

Jesus, coming as the ultimate grave robber!

### ***STUDY QUESTIONS***

1. When an object is covered in jewels, is the value of the object increased? When the jewels are removed, what then is the value of the object? Does it have any value aside from its trappings?
2. If you typically wear a lot of jewelry, what is your personal worth with and without it? If the answer is the same, why do you bother to wear it? If the answer is more with the jewelry, do you actually feel that you are worth less as a person without something on you to artificially create value?
3. Does jewelry increase the attraction or affection people feel for you? Whose does it increase? How about the envy? Whose envy? Why would you want to be envied? Do you feel safe wearing it?
4. Is a person wearing a crown any better than one not wearing it? If you had never seen Queen Elizabeth, and you met her in a group of women, all of the same age, wearing the

same style of clothing, and were not introduced, would you treat her with more respect than the others? What if, after a few hours, she put on a royal robe and the crown jewels? How would you treat her? What is the difference?

5. If you are not good enough for whatever situation you are entering without jewels and gold, can you possibly be good enough with them? If they are taken from you, will you become less of a person?
6. How many of those who are idolized in this world, i.e., sports stars, movie stars, etc., bedeck themselves heavily with jewelry and other status symbols? Why do you think they do this?
7. What is your impression of someone you see wearing a lot of jewelry? Before a word is exchanged, what opinion have you formed of them? Do you think that is the opinion they were hoping for?
8. How much of the treasure you own would you trade for the presence of God in your life? What worth does He place on our treasure here?
9. In Ecclesiastes, Solomon bemoaned that fact that when he died, he had no control over whether a good man or a fool would reap the treasure and the other benefits of all of the toil Solomon had done on earth. How do you feel about dying and leaving your accumulated earthly treasure behind? If you could establish standards of worth to pre-qualify inheritors, what would they be?
10. What determines the worth of an object? What determines the worth of a diamond? What determines the worth of a person?
11. What is the most valuable thing on this earth in your opinion?
12. What do you think a graven image is? Is it possible to make ourselves into one? Can we worship ourselves? Cause others to?
13. What do you think the cause of the increasing popularity of body piercing might be?