

# **The Greatest Commandments and the Prophets**

**Idolatry**



# Indictments of Israel and Judah

- **Idolatry (failure to love God)**
- **Injustice and oppression of the poor and sojourner (failure to love neighbor)**
- The other indictments below can be subsumed under the top two:
  - Corrupt leadership
  - Empty/hypocritical worship; integration of pagan ritual into Temple worship
  - Rejections of the prophets/refusal to repent





# Idolatry

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- When we envision Israel's and Judah's idolatry, images of people bowing down to idols come to mind the most.
  - I Kings 18 (Elijah confronts King Ahab and the prophets of Baal and Asherah)
  - II Kings 1:2-16 (Elijah condemns King Ahaziah for entreating/inquiring of Baal-zebub)
  - II Kings 10 & 17 (Jehu destroys the prophets of Baal, but Baal worship reemerges)
  - II Kings 21 (King Manasseh set up an Asherah pole in the Temple; later destroyed by King Josiah)
  - Jeremiah 7:9 and 11:13 (Jeremiah condemns making offerings to Baal; notes that Judah has as many gods as cities)
- How was the people's idol worship a demonstration of lack of love for God?

# Idolatry

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- A less obvious idolatry was political in nature and origin.
  - Solomon used marriage to cement alliances with surrounding nations (I Kings 3:1; 11:1-4), but these marriages led his heart to foreign gods. God rebuked him directly (I Kings 11).
  - Ahab's marriage to Jezebel - done for alliance with Sidon/Phoenicia - established Baal and Asherah worship in Samaria (I Kings 16:31-33), drawing rebuke and prophesy of a severe drought from Elijah (I Kings 17, 18, and 21).
  - Jehoshaphat set up a military alliance with Ahab (II Chronicles 18:1-3), drawing rebuke from God through Jehu (II Chronicles 19:2).
  - Ahaz used silver and gold from the temple to secure an alliance with the king of Assyria, which led to the installation of pagan altars in Jerusalem (II Kings 16); Isaiah prophesied in Isaiah 7 that God would bring judgement through Assyria.
- How/Why did foreign alliances lead the people of Israel and Judah into idolatry? How was their seeking these alliances in the first place a demonstration of their lack of love for God?



# **Why did the people of Israel and Judah engage in idol worship?**

They were seeking fertility, rain, agricultural prosperity, security, and political power from the surrounding nations and their gods rather than relying entirely on Yahweh God.

Often through marriage and political alliances, they were associating with pagan people who worshipped other gods. Instead of rejecting them, they joined in.

Essentially,  
they failed to love and trust in God. They thought they needed the protection and wealth of other nations and their leaders.

