

**TITLE:** WORSHIPPING NEHUSHTAN!

**TEXT:** 1 Samuel 4:1-11; 2 Kings 18:4; John 4:24

**THESIS:** The purpose of this sermon is to demonstrate God's disapproval of ALL worship that He does sanction. We will look at 3 examples of how worship can, even with good intentions, be channeled toward something other than God.

**INTRO:** The AFA usually does a very good job of combating the liberal, anti-God folks in our country. They've boycotted several businesses who support the pro-abortion and homosexual agendas, and have seen some very positive results from these efforts. Lately their focus has been on businesses that have removed Christmas from their products and ads. They want Christians to complain to these places and demand that Christmas be reinstated! This may be a good example of what we want to address this morning...worshipping the wrong thing.

## **I. THE ARK OF THE COVENANT (1 Sam 4:1-11):**

### A. Setting:

1. Israel defeated by the Philistines. Ark of the covenant brought from Shiloh. Celebration in the camp because of the ark.
2. Philistines fear God, but fight anyway. In spite of the ark, Philistines defeat Israel again and capture the ark!

### B. Israel's shouting was in vain, because God was not with them

### C. Israel assumed the ark was all-powerful.

### D. Israel may have remembered:

1. God's entering the tabernacle-the mercy seat above the ark-**Ex 40:34**; where God appears & speaks- **Lev 16:2; Num 7:89**
2. God's leading them through the desert- visibly through the ark (\***Num 10:33-36**)
3. The miraculous crossing of the Jordan (**Jos 3:13-17** – as soon as the ark entered the river, the waters were stopped)
4. The defeat of Jericho (**Jos 6** – the people followed the ark around the city)
5. The people during these times were being faithful to God; the current Israelites were *not*.

### E. Israel worshipped the wrong thing...their object of worship was the ark instead of God.

1. The ark was nothing more than wood overlaid with gold. Its value came when God dwelled with it.
2. Today people search for the ark. Just as it means nothing today to Christians, it should've meant nothing then without God.
3. God departed because the people had departed from Him!

## **II. THE BRASEN SERPENT (Num 21:4-9; 2 Kings 18:4):**

### A. (**Num 21**) During the wilderness wandering, the Israelites complained against God & Moses, and God punished them (v. 4-6).

### B. When they repented, God provided forgiveness and healing (v. 7-9).

### C. The method God used involved an object to be viewed (the fiery serpent). God never said to worship it! Yet...

### D. (**2 Kings 18:4**) After several years of departure from God under the rule of evil King Manasseh, Hezekiah initiated reforms.

### E. He broke in pieces this brass serpent. The people had been burning incense to it!

### F. It was called Nehushtan ("brass" or "serpent"). "A piece of brass!"

## **III. AN UNKNOWN GOD (Acts 17):**

### A. In Acts 17, the Corinthians were worshipping any and every god they could, even erecting an altar to the unknown god (v. 23).

### B. Paul taught them that God is not far from each of us, and desires us to *seek* Him (v. 27).

### C. Many today still worship an unknown Jehovah.

#### 1. They *claim* to worship Jehovah

#### 2. Their worship resembles NT worship of Jehovah (might have some of the required acts of worship, but not all)

#### 3. But they have no idea who Jehovah is and what *He* wants in worship

#### 4. Like the Israelites worshipping the piece of brass instead of God *for what He did with that brass*, too many people are worshipping other things that *seem to them* to be the same as worshipping God:

##### a. The Cross: this image has been worshipped for years. Today almost every kind of person wears it around the neck.

We worship *GOD* for what Jesus did on that cross...for the forgiveness & *spiritual* healing He provided by that cross!

##### b. Buildings: millions of dollars spent on "church" buildings. Greatest European architecture found here.

Also, why do so many people feel the need to go to a building in order to pray?

Even in the Lord's church, these 2 extremes are seen: 1) so much money spent to decorate the building, and 2) the building is sanctified as being "the church" ("go to church").

##### c. Preachers: How many congregations have been split because the preacher leaves and takes half the people with him?

How many members are only as knowledgeable as the preacher can make them? ...as liberal as the preacher?

"Heroes" in the faith are OK, but they are not to be worshipped in these ways.

### D. True worship requires our effort (**John 4:24**)

#### 1. It requires worshipping in spirit.

#### 2. It also requires worshipping in truth.

### E. Although God doesn't operate the same way today that he did in the OT, certain principles still stand.

#### 1. God demands that we obey Him (**1 John 5:3** – this is how we show our love to Him)

#### 2. When we disregard & disobey His word, He will no longer be with us. Just like His departure from the ark (& the temple)

**CONCLUSION:** There are many today that claim a closeness with God. They claim to be worshippers of Him. However, this requires obedience to him through understanding of his word. Without this, one's claims are in vain (like the Israelites rejoicing over the ark, one's rejoicing is in vain). It is so very important for us to *know* what God wants, then to *do* what God wants. Everything else we do, with good motives or not, is in vain. This morning, has your worship been in vain? Have you been worshipping an unknown God?