

Associates for Scriptural Knowledge • P.O. Box 25000, Portland, OR 97298-0990 USA
 © ASK, March 2025 • All rights reserved • Number 3/25

Telephone: 503 292 4352

• Internet: www.askelm.com •

E-Mail: askoffice@askelm.com

Lingering Idolatry in the Temple of God

by Ernest L. Martin, Ph.D., September 1, 2000

Edited by David Sielaff, 2007, March 2025¹

Read the accompanying “[March 2025 Newsletter](#)”

Listen to the Byte Show Interview on this article:

“Lingering Idolatry in the Temple of God” - [Listen](#) • [Download](#) • [MP3](#)

[More Byte Show Interviews ...](#)



The Sanctuary of God contained idolatrous images that God Himself commanded be included in the Tabernacle! This statement may surprise some people who study and love the biblical revelation because of its widespread condemnation of idolatry and its teaching of YHWH’s unbending strictures against depicting Him or other gods in any physical fashion (such as by making idols, images, statues, pictures, icons, etc.).

So stringent is the biblical theme of avoiding idolatry (or idolatrous acts) that the Israelites were ordered even in the Ten Commandments NOT to make similitudes or images of spiritual or physical beings.

of ANYTHING **IN** the heavens,

of ANYTHING **ON** the earth or

of ANYTHING **UNDER** the earth (and that includes ANYTHING within the seas and oceans)

And, the people of Israel were ordered NOT to devote worship to images in any religious activity, in any ritualistic manner, to any created “thing” whether a power or force, an object, or a living creature, physical or spirit. All of these three realms are indicated in Exodus 20:1–6 and Deuteronomy 4:15–20.

Though we read throughout the Bible that God loathes idolatry in any form, still the introductory statement of this research article is absolutely true. God Himself commanded the Israelites to accept idolatrous rituals in the time of Moses that led the Israelites directly into the practice of idolatry (at least that is how Israel interpreted those commands of God).

We need to learn that there is always a particular correct manner in which to interpret or to understand a command of God, and the manner should never be twisted to produce opposite effects that will evoke

¹ Read also the “[September 2000 Newsletter](#)” that introduced this original article. DWS

diametrically opposed views as coming from God.²

The teaching that I am referring to is in the Bible but many people have passed right over some of its most important doctrinal statements regarding God's commandments. This is usually because of preconceived (and often erroneous) ideas on what they think the Scriptures teach (or what they think the Scriptures **ought to teach**).

But strange as it may seem, even God Himself, through the words of one of His most powerful prophets in the Old Testament, later made the judgmental appraisal that the Israelites were commanded to perform certain rites and to involve certain images that caused them to commit idolatry. Yes, God said that those other commands **were NOT GOOD**.³

Furthermore, the prophet who stated these things was backed up by another prophet who **NAMED the images** that God commanded to be designed and made as Moses saw in the . Amazingly, the images that became idolatrous were ordered by God to be located within the very Temple of God.

That command of God concerning the introduction of those images into the Tabernacle and later Temple remained in force for almost a thousand years. And, interestingly enough, even the first martyr of the Christian *Ekklesia* (who was Stephen the Deacon) referred to this early period of time when the Israelites were practicing a form of idolatry that involved certain spiritual beings that God had commanded to be used in His worship in the Sanctuaries (Acts 7:41–43). The fact is, the Israelites were so endued with the practice of idolatry when they came out of Egypt that they were not prepared (or spiritually ready) to adopt more mature and advanced teaching in which idolatry became a prime transgression.

Only later, in the time of Jeremiah and Ezekiel do we find God finally having such images banished from the Temple. It was then that Jeremiah and Ezekiel got rid of much of the idolatry that came from initiating the earlier commands of God relating to the Tabernacle and finally in the Temple at Jerusalem.

But in the early age of Israel being a nation (at the time of their Exodus from Egypt), the conduct of the Israelites showed they were so prone to accept idolatrous principles that even God felt He had to give them some idolatrous teachings in order for them to comprehend what little spiritual truths the Israelites had mustered while in Egypt. God, in a sense, went to the “bottom of the barrel” and gave the Israelites commands that finally resulted in them accepting a vast amount of idolatry into their mainstream teachings involving the Tabernacle (and later, the Temple). Or, as the Holy Scriptures relate it, we find God commanding Israel to accept doctrines and to perform religious rituals that **were NOT GOOD for the Israelites to practice at the time**.

Yes, even God Himself recognized that some commands He gave the Israelites **were NOT GOOD**. They were commands that led Israel into full-scale idolatry. That is precisely what the Scriptures teach us, if one will read the Word of God at its face value and try not to interpret away what the plain words state. Most people, however, are not aware of these commands of God that are recorded in the Bible because most (it seems) read right over them quickly without pausing to ask why in the world were they first given by God Himself.

The Strange Commands of God that Led to the Practice of Idolatry

Although God in the Ten Commandments utterly condemned any form of idolatry and He placed His proscription against the practice in those early constitutional commands, God still taught the Israelites to perform commands that were NOT GOOD for them. These commands concerned the introduction of Cherubimic images in their worship within the Tabernacle (the portable Temple). God even allowed it to happen again in the time of Solomon where images of Cherubim and twelve bulls were outwardly displayed in the Temple (1 Kings 6:24–29; 2 Chronicles 4:15). Indeed, God even approved of this image display that

² If we were in the same situations as the Israelites, with their experiences, knowledge, and limited understanding, would we do better than they did in the wilderness? I think most of us — in ignorance — would probably do the same as they did. DWS

³ See my November 2003 article “[The Pattern of the Temple](#).” The Tabernacle and all the Temples were models of a heavenly structure that exists at this moment. DWS

Solomon continued when he built the Temple in Jerusalem. This was a violation of the strict wording of the Second Commandment.

Did you read me correctly? I said that God not only allowed a certain amount of violation of the Ten Commandments in the Tabernacle and later Temple, but God even commanded that those Cherubimic and bovine images be introduced even though His commands finally led Israel into idolatrous practices that were contrary to the plain statements of the Ten Commandments! Now WHY would God “command” these things is the knowledge we should seek in order to understand these things.

The real truth of the matter is that anything can be made to say what a person wishes the “truth” to say, and usually it can occur quite easily. A rational person might argue that a mere image of itself does not mean that the person uses it in an idolatrous fashion. Yes, but still it often takes an image to show outright idolatry in action. So, images need not of themselves be idolatrous, the temptations are strong to make them such by most human beings coming in contact with them (especially if the images are God ordained).

Those commands of God to build images within the Temple are an action that should not be taken by us in a trivial attitude (or think they are an oversight on God’s part). God’s commands should always be taken seriously and they should not be jettisoned into oblivion as a mere sideline issue and without any significance for us as is often done by some theologians, preachers, and priests.

These commands of God also should not be explained away as irrelevant (as do many modern exegetes who do not understand why God did what He did). The foolish attempts to get rid of or minimize these explicit commands of God should never be looked upon as simple allowances by God to accommodate the weak character traits of the early Israelites at the time of the Exodus or in the period of Solomon.

As a matter of fact, it was the prophet Ezekiel that God inspired to record His final displeasure at having commanded the early Israelites under Moses to observe and to recognize images in the Temple that led them into abject idolatry (and even to the practice of evil idolatrous worship) and these idolatrous results

Editor’s Note: I use the *Concordant Literal Version* in this article.

First, when you review these verses with your favorite English translation, note that Dr. Martin goes back and forth between the books of Exodus and Ezekiel. Do not confuse the two.

Also, note the historical chronology of the important biblical texts in this article:

- **Exodus** and **Deuteronomy** were written by Moses before the people of Israel entered the Promised Land.
- **Isaiah** was written during the time of King Hezekiah of Judah, hundreds of years after King David.
- **Jeremiah** had his prophetic ministry from God during the reigns of the last Kings of Judah.
- **Ezekiel** (a younger contemporary of Jeremiah), received his prophecies from YHWH after the beginning of deportations of the people of Judah to Babylon. *DWS*

were witnessed within the precincts of the Tabernacle that God commanded in the wilderness.

That is right, dear folks, God Himself commanded the Israelites in the wilderness at the start of the Exodus period to make images that proved to be idolatrous and to place them within the Holy Sanctuary. Now is the time to read those commands in this article. I deliberately took considerable introductory space in order to show the seriousness of those bad commands of God. That is what Ezekiel said under inspiration: that God introduced commands that were not good once the Israelites showed early in the Exodus period that they were not willing to practice God’s good commands.

Note carefully these negative commands of God in Ezekiel’s prophecy that the Israelites were expected to obey. Indeed, what do some of you think about the majestic “Ark of the Covenant”? Is it a piece of architectural junk from the Age of Idolatry, or is it the resplendent symbol of the holy presence of God Himself within His divine Glory?

You may come to a strong opinion about this before you finish this article. Now read the biblical texts on these important and significant matters. YHWH said to the Prophet Ezekiel to tell the exiles from Judah about conditions in the time of Moses.

God's Commentary in Ezekiel on the Laws He Gave to Israel in the Time of Moses

“However, I did lift My hand in swearing to them [as a warning] in the wilderness,

[1] **to scatter them among the nations and**

[2] **to toss them away throughout the lands,**

[Why?] **because**

- **My ordinances they did not do, and**
- **My statutes they rejected, and**
- **My sabbaths they profaned, and**
- **their eyes continued following the idol clods [of clay] of their fathers. ...**

[1] **I also GAVE THEM STATUTES THAT WERE NOT GOOD and**

[2] **ORDINANCES in which THEY COULD NOT LIVE.**

• *Ezekiel 20:23–25 CLV*

Yes, God gave them commands which resulted in them NOT living in a righteous and proper manner.⁴ Ezekiel continues his message:

“I was defiling them in their gifts [gifts of sacrifices that they gave to God] when they made all opening up the womb pass through fire, [Why did YHWH do that?] that I might make them desolate, in order that they may know that I am Yahweh.”

• *Ezekiel 20:26 CLV*

In plain language Ezekiel writes that God gave them commandments that were not good. Those negative commands led the Israelites (through ignorance and their natural fleshly inclinations) into performing and presenting paganized sacrifices in the Temple — even to the practice of killing one or more of their children as a human sacrifice (usually the sacrifice of the firstborn was the normal heathen method). Yes, the commands that God gave them led them in the final outcome to commit human sacrificing of children — **“they made all opening up the womb pass through fire”** (20:26 CLV).

According to Maimonides, the great Jewish authority in the time of the Crusades, some “humanitarian” parents, did not kill their children at all, though they “pretended” to do so. Why would they do that? They seemed to have the idea that this pretended sacrifice of the firstborn son in some way reflected what God would do in the world when the Messianic period would come at the End of the Age. The pretense was to wrap the child and bundle it carefully (so that not even a spark of actual fire would hit the child’s skin).

This, according to Maimonides was the final ritual. In some cases, the old practice of the Amorites persisted. Of course, God did not intend that introducing those images into the Tabernacle rituals would lead to infant sacrifice. But they did! Give an inch, and the people take a mile. This type of accumulation of pagan teachings is by the attrition method — a little at a time. Note what Jeremiah wrote (before Ezekiel):

“And they built the high-places of Baal which are in the ravine of the son of Hinnom, to have their sons and their daughters pass through fire for Molech (which I did not instruct them, nor did it come up on My heart), to do this abhorrence that it may cause Judah to sin.”

• *Jeremiah 32:35 CLV*

⁴ The predictions of the dispersion of Israel, delivered by Moses just before his death, are evidently being referred to: they received a partial accomplishment at the Babylonian captivity, but will be more exactly fulfilled in a day future to us. See Leviticus 26:33; Deuteronomy 28:64–68, 32:26–27; Psalm 106:27; Jeremiah 15:4. *DWS*

“When you bear your gifts when you pass your children through the fire, you are defiling yourselves by all your idol clods until this day. And

- should I let Myself be inquired of by you, house of Israel?

As I live, averring is my Lord Yahweh,

- should I let Myself be inquired of by you?”

• *Ezekiel 20:31 CLV*

YHWH will no longer answer them until their punishment is complete.

“For they have committed adultery, and blood is on their hands; they have committed adultery with their idol clods, and they have even passed their sons whom they bore for Me through fire to them for food.

This furthermore they have done TO ME: They defiled My sanctuary on that day and profaned My sabbaths. When they slew their sons for their idol clods, they came into My sanctuary on that day to profane it. And behold, they did thus in the midst of My house.”

• *Ezekiel 23:37–39 CLV*

What we read (above) in Ezekiel chapter 20 is the appraisal of God Himself, stated through His prophet Ezekiel, that YHWH’s initial commands in some contexts proved in later times to be **“commands that were not good.”** The outcome was very bad indeed.

But what were those commands that God at first gave to the Israelites that turned out to be so very bad for them? Before I answer that question precisely, we should be aware of what God did NOT mean. It is plain that God did not mean in Ezekiel chapter 20 that He simply ALLOWED the Israelites to continue in their heathen ways. They rejected YHWH, and He sent them into exile.

This is what God did with the Gentiles after the flood, according to the apostle Paul:

“Therefore God gives them over to dishonorable passions. For their females, besides, alter the natural use into that which is beside nature. Likewise also the males, besides, leaving the natural use of the female, were inflamed in their craving for one another

... And according as they do not test God, to have Him in recognition [knowledge], God gives them over to a disqualified mind, to do that which is not befitting.”

• *Romans 1:26–28 CLV*

God ALLOWED the Gentiles to do wrong WITHOUT THE PERMISSION of God. But in the section of Ezekiel chapter 20, the texts state in the clearest of Hebrew (and in the clear English translation) that GOD **COMMANDED** (not simply “allowed” — but commanded) the Israelites in the wilderness to practice the commands of God that led them finally into idolatry.

These odious and bad commands given by God to the Israelites (remember, God said they were NOT GOOD commands) were given in the precise manner and with the same wording in the Hebrew (even the vowel points are identical) where it says He “gave them MY statutes, and showed them MY judgments, which if a man do, he shall even live in them” (Ezekiel 20:11).

These commands that were NOT GOOD were also written in the Scriptures (with the exact Hebrew words and same vowel points) as when God gave Israel His positive commands that they should keep His sabbaths. Notice how this is the case in the same chapter 20 in the Book of Ezekiel.

“And I [YHWH] also gave My sabbaths to them to become a SIGN between Me and them, [Why?] to make known that it is I, Yahweh, Who hallows them.”

• *Ezekiel 20:12 CLV*

These were good and positive commands that God gave to those Israelites.

In the same manner (and with the same wording in the Hebrew) God gave the Israelites commandments that WERE NOT GOOD (Ezekiel 20:25). God does not say the commands turned to be bad ones in the end. He states dogmatically that some of His early commandments to the Israelites were simply NOT

GOOD for them to begin with. True, they turned out worse than God stated (indeed, they were far worse).

This occurred because of the nascent proclivity for the early Israelites to rebel against the basic commands of God that He spoke for their good. It seemed to be in their very nature to want to be idolaters. Recall that when Moses was on Mount Sinai to receive the Ten Commandments and some subsidiary laws, the Israelites clamored for Aaron to make them a molten calf as an image of their “God” who brought them out of Egypt, and Aaron went along with the endeavor (Exodus chapter 32).

Moses was infuriated at their flagrant idolatry, and the Israelites were punished for this error. However, Israel did not stop their inclinations to sway toward image-making and the production of human-made artifacts to “aid” them in their worship. So ingrained were their emotions to gravitate toward idolatrous ways that God finally gave them commandments that were NOT GOOD, that led them into further debauchery with those images.

God’s Bad Commands in Exodus — Referred to in Ezekiel?

What was it that God commanded that turned out to be very bad commands to the Israelites? The context of Ezekiel (along with the teachings and example of Jeremiah and the prophet Amos) showed that it was God’s command to place images within the Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle (and later to allow — or command — Solomon to do the same thing). What is remarkable in all of this is the fact that those commands of God to make images of Cherubim and place them in the Tabernacle were given to the Israelites in spite of the Second Command of the Ten Commandments which stated:

“You shall not make for yourself a carving nor any physical representation of that in the heavens above or that on the earth beneath, or that in the waters beneath the earth.”

• ***Exodus 20:4 CLV***

The rest of the Second Command states that Israelites should not bow before such images or idols nor to serve them. But when the Israelites in the wilderness blatantly refused to keep the commands concerning the sabbaths and other statutes and judgments, and that they continued in their idolatrous practices of their own accord, He then **“... also gave them statutes that were NOT good and ordinances in which they could NOT live”** (Ezekiel 20:25 CLV).

God gave these later commands even though He had just deposited the Ten Commandments into their hands that prohibited such idolatrous acts. But, and in accord with God’s threat as we read in Ezekiel, God commanded them, five chapters and sixteen verses after giving the Second Command of the Ten Commandments. Here is what YHWH ordered the Israelites to do:

“You will make two cherubim of gold; you shall hammer them a stiff shell of one piece with the two ends of the propitiatory shelter [“mercy seat”]. Make one cherub from this end and one cherub from that end. Of one piece with the propitiatory shelter [“mercy seat”] you shall make the cherubim at its two ends. The cherubim will come to be with spreading wings above, overshadowing with their wings over the propitiatory shelter [“mercy seat”] with their faces each to his fellow. Toward the propitiatory shelter [“mercy seat”] the faces of the cherubim shall come to be.”

• ***Exodus 25:18–20 CLV***

Later God commanded Moses to make even more images of cherubim and to place them on the veil (Exodus 26:31) and on the curtains (Exodus 36:8) of the Tabernacle. These images were forbidden by the Second Command of the Ten Commandments. These were the commands that God later said were **“NOT GOOD”** (Ezekiel 20:25).

The “Brazen Image” of a Snake

But there is even more. About 39 years after God gave Moses the Ten Commandments to present to Israel as His law, God then commanded Moses to make a brazen image of a snake (which is also a clear

violation of the Second Command of the Ten Commandments). It should be understood that if God wishes to change (or even to violate) a former command that He made (even if it were one of the Ten Commandments) God has the power and authority to do such actions.

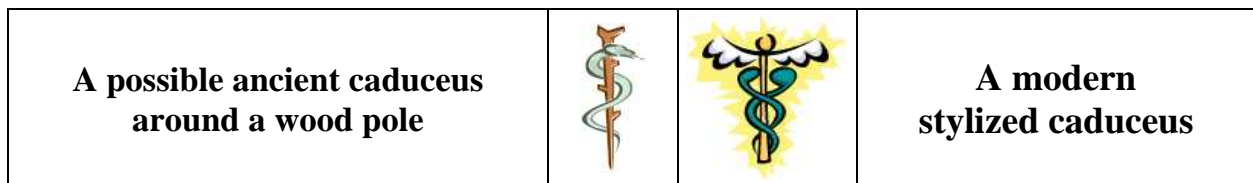
After all, it was He who gave the laws in the first place, and He has the right and the prerogative of changing or eliminating such laws at any time He chooses. So God Himself in the year 39 of the Exodus gave a command that was contrary to the Second Command of the Ten Commandments. He ordered Moses to make an image of a poisonous snake and to hang that snake/image onto a pole that the Israelites could look toward for a physical remedy in the wake of being bitten by poisonous snakes (Numbers 21:6–8).

Let us understand once more that God can change any law He wishes and at any time He chooses. He has done so in the past and He can do it in the future. If God wishes to introduce idolatry into the Tabernacle (His divine Temple) even though it is a violation of the Second Commandment, God can do as He jolly well pleases. This is a principle that must always be understood and recognized by God’s own children and His people. God is in charge, not us!

So, near the end of the 40 years of wilderness journeys by the Israelites, God decided to adopt some idolatrous ways to teach the immature Israelites what calamitous consequences would develop by their insistence on having images of Cherubim in the Temple and also having an idolatrous brazen snake on a pole. And true to form, the Cherubim and the snake/image later became so idolatrous to the Israelites, that in the time of Hezekiah the snake/image had to be destroyed because of the rampant idolatry that it provoked (2 Kings 18:4). But that did not end the matter.

The Israelites began to worship the two cherubim that God had placed in the Holy of Holies associated with the Ark of the Covenant. Even in the wilderness the Israelites began their worship and adoration of the Cherubim (and those depicted on the veils and curtains within the Tabernacle and Temple that Solomon built). These events seem to be a clear violation of the Second of the “Ten Commmandments, and weaken the very spirit and the meaning behind the Second Commandment.

It is important to recognize that the command of God ordering the Israelites make the images of the Cherubim, and the image of a snake on a pole (as in a modern caduceus of medicine today) both appear to directly violate the Second Commandment against idolatry.



Yes, this was the situation in the time of Moses. In doing this, one might think that IT WAS NOT ALWAYS INEVITABLE THAT IDOLATRY WOULD EMERGE. Yes, but it almost always did!

But what happened to the Israelites in their appreciation of these images of the Cherubim associated with the Ark of the Covenant? They soon (even while they were still in the wilderness) began to worship those statues and images. This infuriated Jeremiah at a later time as well as Ezekiel. So, when the Temple was just on the verge of being destroyed by the Babylonians, the prophet Jeremiah decided to get rid of the Ark of the Covenant and the worship of it by the Israelites. He felt the best thing to do was to bury it and then to tell the Israelites to forget it and its place of burial. Jeremiah knew the evil those images caused in the Temple.

Jeremiah was **“the son of Hilkiah, of the priests that were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin”** (Jeremiah 1:1) near Jerusalem, took the Ark of the Covenant with its idolatrous depiction of Cherubim out of the Holy of Holies and (according to the Book of Second Maccabees) deposited them in a cave on the east side of Jordan (opposite Jericho) near the area where Moses was buried. Notice the reference in this historical work that was written about a hundred years before the birth of Christ:

“One finds in the records that Jeremiah the prophet ordered those who were being deported

to take some of the fire [from the altar of the Temple], as has been told, and that the prophet after giving them the law instructed those who were being deported not to forget the commandments of the Lord, nor to be led astray in their thoughts upon seeing the gold and silver statues and their adornment.”

• *2 Maccabees 2:1–2 Apocrypha, Revised Standard Version*

Yes, there were images and idols in the Temple and some of them were what God Himself commanded to be there. Continuing on in Second Maccabees:

“And with other similar words he [Jeremiah] exhorted them that the law should not depart from their hearts. It was also in the writing that the prophet, having received an oracle, ordered that the tent and the ark [of the covenant WITH THE TWO CHERUBS] should follow with him, and that he went out to the mountain where Moses had gone up and had seen the inheritance of God.

And Jeremiah came and found a cave, and he brought there the tent and the ark [with the two cherubs] and the altar of incense, and he sealed up the entrance. Some of those who followed him came up to mark the way, but could not find it. When Jeremiah learned of it, he rebuked them and declared:

‘The place shall be unknown until God gathers his people together again and shows his mercy. And then the Lord will disclose these things, and the glory of the Lord and the cloud will appear, as they were shown in the case of Moses, and as Solomon asked that the place should be specially consecrated.’

It was also made clear that being possessed of wisdom Solomon offered sacrifice for the dedication and completion of the temple. Just as Moses prayed to the Lord, and fire came down from heaven and devoured the sacrifices, so also Solomon prayed, and the fire came down and consumed the whole burnt offerings.”

• *2 Maccabees 2:3–10 Apocrypha RSV*

Jeremiah was so exasperated about the penchant of the Israelites (both those of the dismantled Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah) to turn physical things that God ordained even in the Temple into idolatrous artifacts that Jeremiah prophesied that in the future NO TEMPLE OF GOD would ever have an Ark of the Covenant again (with its permitted image of two Cherubim brazenly depicted). That is the main reason that Jeremiah took the Tent (that housed the Ark) and the Ark of the Covenant itself (with its two Cherubim) out of the Temple to hide them so that they would not be found to be placed in any Temple after the Babylonian Captivity was over.

Note what Jeremiah wrote, that God said would occur.

“‘Return, backsliding sons,’ averring is Yahweh, ‘for I Myself possess you; I will take you, one from a city and two from a family, and I will bring you to Zion. Then I will give you shepherds according to My own heart, and they will graze you with knowledge and intelligence. When it comes to be that you increase and are fruitful in the land, in those days,’ averring is Yahweh, they shall no longer say,

‘The coffer [Ark] of the covenant of Yahweh;

it shall NOT ascend on their heart,

NOR shall they remember it,

NOR shall they miss it,

NOR shall another one be made again.’

In that era they shall call Jerusalem the throne of Yahweh, and all the nations will be expectant toward her, for the Name of Yahweh at Jerusalem, and they shall no longer walk after the obduracy [stubbornness] OF THEIR EVIL HEART. In those days the house of Judah shall walk WITH the house of Israel, and they shall enter together from the land of the north to the land which I allotted to your fathers.”

• *Jeremiah 3:14–18 CLV*

[**EDITOR'S NOTE:** *Keep in mind that the Book of Jeremiah is inspired Scripture.*

The Book of Second Maccabees is not inspired, but it does contain accurate historical accounts. However, its accuracy cannot be extended to its conclusions or its comments on God's prophecies. DWS]

The Two Cherubim of the Ark of the Covenant Had Personal Names!

We now come to an interesting fact that many of you may never have seen before. Do you realize that the two Cherubs that made up the one image in the Holy of Holies had personal names and that the Israelites called them by those individual names? That is right. Those names are revealed in the Holy Scriptures. Recall that Jeremiah (according to the historical account from the book of Second Maccabees) said that he took the Tent (or Tabernacle) that housed the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies.

The Holy of Holies was a small tent that covered the two Cherubs and the Ark. It is not to be confused with the large Tent (or Tabernacle) that made up the whole of the portable Temple in the time of Moses and lasted until the time Solomon took the Ark of the Covenant into his Temple building in Jerusalem.

This separate "Tabernacle" is mentioned in 1 Kings 1:39. This was a small Tent that became associated always with the Ark of the Covenant. This is the Tent that Jeremiah took along with the Ark to bury across the Jordan River east of Jericho. The Tent and Ark never went to Ethiopia as some people have imagined, nor were they buried in the bowels of the Temple precincts in Jerusalem as some later Jews speculated.

These factors concerning the small Tent that accompanied the Ark of the Covenant becomes a major key in identifying the names of the two heavenly Cherubim that the two images (soldered together as one image) depicted on earth. That key comes from Amos chapter 5. Notice this scriptural indication.

"Have you not brought close to Me sacrifices and approach presents In the wilderness forty years, house of Israel?"

And now you have borne the booth of **MOLOCH And the star of your elohim **KEWAN** [Saturn], The images which you MADE for yourselves. Yet I will carry you away into exile beyond Damascus, Says Yahweh, Elohim of hosts is His Name."**

• **Amos 5:25-27**

What kind of a Tent (or Tabernacle) contained two images that were indeed a single "Star" (an image molded together into one image of two heavenly beings)? This was the special Tent that was erected over the Ark of the Covenant that contained the two Cherubim that faced one another with their wings outstretched toward each other over the Mercy [Covering] Seat that contained the sacred items within the Ark of the Covenant.

In the plainest of language, we have the two Cherubim named by the Israelites. One of them was Moloch (which is the Hebrew word for "King" or "King Star" which was the name given to the planet Jupiter). The other was Chiun (which was another name for the planet Saturn, the furthest planet observable by the naked eye in our solar system).

Now note this: When the two Cherubim were first constructed at the beginning of the forty years wandering of the Israelite Exodus period, Moses was told to have the two Cherubs facing one another. This represented Jupiter (a closer planet to earth) facing Saturn (the furthest visible planet from earth) in a conjunction with each other in the sky.

Jupiter takes about 12 years to orbit our Sun; while Saturn takes about 30 years to do the same thing. If the two planets are shown in conjunction with one another (that is, as the Cherubim were shown in the Tabernacle and Temple) facing one another, it will take just over 20 years for the two planets to be exactly in the same position of the sky together and in conjunction again.

It is interesting that the great "Massing of the Planets" in Taurus (the Bull) that happened on May 5/6 of this year [2000 AD], and which I wrote about last year in a short Prophetic Report article ("[The Massing](#)

[of the Planets](#)”), was also a time when Moloch (Jupiter) and Chiun (Saturn) once again “faced each other” as they did in the time that Moses ordered the Ark of the Covenant to be placed in the Holy of Holies at the beginning of the Exodus.

At that time in May of the year 2000, Jupiter and Saturn (as seen from earth) were about 2 degrees from each other, and both (of course) were in Taurus (the Bull) and very near “facing each other” after an absence of just over 20 years. But precisely on May 27, 2000, the two planets came to an exact “facing.” They faced each other in a marvelous conjunction (only about one degree latitude separated them).

An Earlier Conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn in the Time of Moses

- This would have been how the two planets were situated when Moses had the Ark of the Covenant constructed.
- Then they had 2 times 20 years (or 40 years) for the period of the Exodus that Amos 5:25 mentioned.
- There was then to be a period of 480 years (1 Kings 6:1) for the start of Solomon building the Temple in Jerusalem (that is 24 times 20 years — a significant biblical number).
- The next time in our modern period that Jupiter and Saturn (or Moloch and Chiun) “face each other” will be on December 21, 2020 when they appear at the very beginning of the sign Aquarius (not Taurus).

In just over 20 years [from September 2000, *DWS*] we find Jupiter (Moloch) and Saturn (Chiun) “face each other” again to appear like a “Single Star.” Whether these indications can be used in a prophetic sense is another question altogether and it takes too long for me to discuss this possibility. I plan to write a book on the Chronology of the Bible as it relates to prophetic events for the future when I can spare the time.

[**Note:** *Dr. Martin did not write his book on chronology and prophecy before he died in January 2002. Nor did he leave any notes on his computer. DWS*]

The early Israelites noticed this remarkable astronomical phenomenon of these two planets and they gave religious value to it. Indeed, they began to worship the two Cherubim (named Moloch and Chiun that symbolized Jupiter and Saturn) and they fell into an idolatrous worship of those two Cherubs (and their images in the Holy of Holies) for the whole period of the forty years wandering in the wilderness. They were even continuing the practice (and even with worse consequences) in the time of the prophet Amos (Amos 5:25–26).

Stephen, a deacon of the early *ekklesia* of Jerusalem, referred to the same practice in his discourse before the Sanhedrin in the year following Christ’s crucifixion, just before Stephen was stoned to death by a mob (Acts 7:54–60), encouraged by a man named Saul who later converted and became the apostle Paul:

“And you took up the tabernacle of Moloch [Jupiter] and the constellation of your god Raiphan [Saturn], the models which you make, to worship them. ‘And I shall be exiling you beyond’ Babylon’ [quoting or referencing Amos 5:28].”

• **Acts 7:43 CLV**

Note that Stephen then called the planet Saturn by the name “Raiphan” (spelled *Remphan* in the King James Version) which is a Greek translation of the earlier Semitic term “Chiun.” Those images of Cherubs did great harm in Israel.

There are people today who are still enamored with this Ark of the Covenant (and its two Cherubs named Moloch and Chiun). Without doubt, if the Ark could be once again discovered, they would readily place the two Cherubs right back in any newly built Temple in Jerusalem. The human tendency is strong to do it. The fact is, however, Jeremiah saw the idolatry that had developed over the two Cherubs so he (under inspiration of God, in my view) took the special Tent of the Cherubs as well as the two images of

the Cherubs molded into one image and hid it away. Then he wrote Jeremiah 3:14–18 that the true people of God would no longer require the Tent or the Ark of the Covenant in which to worship God:

[Reread Jeremiah 3:14–18 on page 9 above. DWS]

And there was another reason why Jeremiah took those two images out of the Holy of Holies. That is because ONE OF THOSE VERY CHERUBS became a sinner of the first magnitude. That one Cherub had done such evil in heaven that he had been thrown out of his exalted position next to the throne of God and was in the time of Jeremiah and Ezekiel considered by God as an evil being — a Cherub that had gone wrong. Which of the two Cherubs was the one who went wrong? The prophet Ezekiel tells us.

One of the Cherubs Depicted on the Ark of the Covenant Had Fallen From Grace

Note what Ezekiel said about one of the Cherubs who had formerly been a righteous spirit being of very high rank in the heavenly hierarchy of divine beings associated with the very Throne of God Himself. This particular Cherub had become rebellious and as a result God rejected him. Which Cherub was it?

“The word of Yahweh came to me, saying:

‘Son of humanity, lift up a dirge over the king of Tyre [who was named Moloch or Melek], and you will say to him: Thus says my Lord Yahweh:

- **YOU [Moloch] were a seal-imprint of a model, Full of wisdom and consummate in loveliness.**
- **YOU were in the luxury [Hebrew: “Eden”] of the garden of Elohim;**
Of every precious stone was YOUR boothlike pavilion,
Carnelian, peridot and diamond, Topaz, onyx and jasper,
Sapphire, carbuncle and emerald;
And with gold have YOU filled YOUR flanks
- **And YOUR alcoves which are in YOU.**
- **In the day of YOUR CREATION they established the anointed cherub's booth.**
- **And I bestowed YOU in the holy mountain of Elohim; YOU were in the midst of the fiery stones.⁵**
- **YOU walked flawless in YOUR ways from the day of YOUR creation, UNTIL iniquity was found in YOU in the increase of YOUR trading.**
- **They filled YOUR midst with violence, and YOU sinned;**
- **So I shall put YOU as profane out of the mountain of Elohim,**
- **And the cherub of the booth will destroy YOU out of the midst of the fiery stones.**
- **YOUR heart was haughty because of YOUR loveliness;**
- **YOU made YOUR wisdom a ruin because of YOUR shining splendor;**
- **I will fling YOU down on the earth;**
- **I will set YOU before kings to make a spectacle of you.**

⁵ To mimic Moloch walking through the stones of fire, apostate Israelites later caused their firstborn to “**pass through the fire.**” This was not a harmless pantomime of an adult ritually carrying a child through standing braziers of fire. It meant that the infants were killed, burning them to death. The children were ritually murdered.

See Leviticus 18:21; Deuteronomy 18:1; 2 Kings 16:3, 17:17, 21:6, 23:10; 2 Chronicles 33:6; Jeremiah 32:35; and Ezekiel 16:21, 20:26, 31; 23:37. These verses tell of all the acts done to serve and worship Moloch (or Molech) by a different name, or to other pagan gods such as the Canaanite-Phoenician god Baal. DWS

Because of

- YOUR many depravities, In the iniquity of YOUR trading,
- YOU profaned YOUR sanctuary; So

I shall bring forth fire from YOUR midst; It will devour YOU; And

I shall turn YOU to ashes on the earth before the eyes of all who see YOU.

- All who know YOU among the peoples will be appalled over YOU;
- YOU will become a decadent thing, And
- YOU will be no more until the eon.’”

• *Ezekiel 28:11–19 CLV*

There you have it! It was Moloch (represented by the planet Jupiter) that was the sinning Cherub. The other Cherub was named Chiun (represented by the planet Saturn with the Sabbath being his day of consecration for worshipping him).

But the Sabbath was made by God for His people to rest, and it was not made for Chiun (Saturn). The early Israelites took the command of God to make the images of the Cherubim and place them in the Holy of Holies as an example given by God to worship those Cherubim (named Moloch and Chiun).

Editor’s note: Read the statements from YHWH to Moloch: **“I will destroy you. ... A fire ... shall devour you”** and **“I will bring you to ashes.”** These phrases indicate some kind of physicality to Moloch at some time, in the future Moloch will cease to exist (for a period of time). Moloch and other spirit beings that cease to exist will be reconciled to God as Paul wrote about in Colossians 1:15–20, Philippians 2:10–11, and 1 Corinthians 15:28. This King of Tyre of Ezekiel chapter 28 was not Satan. It was Moloch.

Spirit beings like Moloch NEVER will become children of God. God has a separate and different destiny for them (that we are not told about) than for human beings. Their status will be inferior to every human being. Our destiny is to become full and mature “children of God” as Christ is now. See my article, [“Spirits Can Die”](#) and Dr. Martin’s [Chapter 24 - "Our Destiny": The Final Revelation of God](#) from his book [The Essentials of New Testament Doctrine](#). DWS

This was one of the commands God gave to the Israelites in the time of Moses. It WAS NOT GOOD for the Israelites because this command led them into idolatry. It would do the same today.

“I also gave them

- **STATUTES that were not good and**
- **ORDINANCES in which they could not live.**

I was defiling them in their gifts

- **when they made all opening up the womb pass through fire,**
- **[WHY?] that I might make them desolate,**
- **in order that they may know that I am Yahweh.”**

• *Ezekiel 20:25–26 CLV*

But with Ezekiel condemning the practice of having the Ark of the Covenant (and its two Cherubs named Moloch and Chiun) in an idolatrous form of worship, and with Jeremiah even hiding the Ark of the Covenant with its special Tent east of Jericho and across the Jordan River, that put an end to such false worship in the Temple rebuilt by Zerubbabel after the exiles returned from Babylon and Persia.

In the Temple of Herod (which was in existence in the time of Jesus), there was no Ark of the Covenant displayed in physical form in the Holy of Holies. Though the actual Ark of the Covenant is still in heaven

(Revelation 11:19), it was not looked on as proper by God-fearing people to have the Ark again placed in a Temple at Jerusalem since we find Jeremiah and Ezekiel objecting to its placement in the Temple.

Idolatry in Our Future?

At the end of age, however, we are told in the Book of Revelation that there will once more be an image of a wild beast (remember that the Cherubs are shown as having four faces: one of a man, an eagle, a bull and a lion — which equals a “wild beast”). This image of the wild beast (probably in the form of Moloch the King) will again be placed in a Temple in Jerusalem as described in Revelation chapter 11.

This “**Image of the Beast**” (or, it means that one or both of the Cherubim will be replaced in a new Temple — remember that there were two images of the Cherubs but they were molded together to form one image) will be again placed in a new Temple in Jerusalem (Revelation 13:11–18). There will also be a “Mark of the Beast” associated with this new Ark of the Covenant. So, the rebellion to God of replacing the Ark happens at the End Time.⁶

Other Questions to Ask

Will this new Ark of the Covenant (which will be the Image of the Beast mentioned in the Book of Revelation) be the one that Jeremiah buried east of Jericho and across the Jordan River? That is possible. As far as Jeremiah is concerned, he stated that the ideal Temple in the future would NEVER AGAIN have an Ark of the Covenant in it (Jeremiah 3:16). This is the position that I [Dr. Martin] personally take. In fact, God was honest in His statement in Ezekiel that His commands “**were NOT GOOD.**”

If anyone wants to replace the Ark of the Covenant back into a renewed Temple, what he or she will be doing is placing the Image of the Beast back into the Holy of Holies. (See Revelation 13:17, 14:9, 11, 15:2, 16:2, 19:20, and 20:4).

While God did allow that to happen in the time of Moses, remember that God said His command to put those images in the Temple (contrary to the Second Commandment) — was one of those commands that Ezekiel 20:25–26 said God gave that “**were not good.**” It led them directly (and quickly) right into idolatry of the most serious kind.

What If the Ark Is Found?

I am certain that if the Ark of the Covenant were once again found (or even a new one made by the Temple authorities), it would lead the people back into the kind of idolatry that

1. the early Israelites engaged in, and
2. what the Book of Revelation states this evil world will adopt when the Beast and the False Prophet are on earth.

Ever since I discovered that the Image of the Beast was indeed the reintroduction of the Ark of the Covenant into an End-Time Temple (and I came to this conclusion well over twenty years ago), I have turned away all my emotional connection with a physical Temple in Jerusalem (or even with a physical Jerusalem).

I now have more important things to be concerned about. True, I plan to give more information on the Temple site as it becomes available, but I have written my book (and with the other articles on our Internet Web Page), I believe I have done my duty to God and to my readers in this matter for the present.⁷

As for me, I have no need for any Ark of the Covenant in my worship. I have only one mediator between the Father and me and that person is Christ Jesus (1 Timothy 2:4–6). As for Temples that are made by the hands of human beings, I have the express teaching of the Holy Spirit that came from the mouth of Stephen.

⁶ See Dr. Martin’s 1990 article, “[Discovering the Mark of the Beast.](#)”

⁷ Dr. Martin wrote a short book titled *The Place of the Third Temple*. He stopped offering it for sale soon after he began his research on the true location of the Jerusalem Temple above and west of the Gihon Spring in the City of David. DWS

Stephen boldly told the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem (and quoting teachings directly from the Old Testament): **“the Most High dwells not in Temples made with [human] hands”** (Acts 7:48). I have not the slightest need for a physical Temple with its Moloch or Chiun — the two Cherubs that Moses placed in the Tabernacle. All I need — and I already have Him — is Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

Indeed, when one reflects upon the teaching of the Second Commandment of the Ten Commandments (and apply what the words state explicitly, without preconceived notions), it could be argued that even the building of a Temple is prohibited in the strict sense of the word. This is because the Temple represents an image or similitude of the House of God in which God resides in heaven. Do we not read in the Second Commandment that Israelites should not make an image of ANYTHING in heaven (or in earth or under the earth, Exodus 20:4)? That is right! Even the building of a physical Temple on earth is getting close to breaking the Second Commandment.

Of course, it must be realized that God in fact ordered Moses to construct the Tabernacle and later God told David to have the Temple built by Solomon.⁸ Yes, indeed, but still we are later told that God does NOT dwell in Temples made with human hands in an actual sense (Acts 7:48). Whatever the case, we Christians do not need a physical Temple in any manner whatever.

Ernest L. Martin, 2000

Edited by David Sielaff, 2007, 2025

Addendum: “Forgiving God” by David Sielaff

For January 2025 I updated my article [“Forgiving God.”](#) If God made it impossible for the people of Israel to succeed in obeying the laws, and if God proclaims that He **“gave them also STATUTES THAT WERE NOT GOOD,”** it seems that Israel was not able to obey God in those instances. Review that article if you find this current article makes you uncomfortable.

How then can it be possible to explain that God is just? However, God does NOT lie. God IS just. God IS righteous. God has made US righteous through Christ’s acts of salvation. Jesus said **“God is spirit, and those who are worshiping Him must be worshiping in spirit and truth”** (John 4:24).

The apostle Paul tells us that the experiences that Israel endured in their disobedience and in God’s judgments were done in part as an example for believers in Christ in the New Covenant and Mystery:

“Now these things became TYPES of US, for US [believers]

- [1] **not to be lusters after evil things, according as they also lust.**
- [2] **Nor yet be becoming idolaters, according as some of them, even as it is written ...**
- [3] **Nor yet may WE be committing prostitution, according as some of them commit prostitution ...**
- [4] **Nor yet may WE be putting the Lord on trial, according as some of them put Him [God] on trial, and perished by serpents.**
- [5] **Nor yet be murmuring even as some of them murmur, and perished ... Now all this befalls them typically.**

Yet it was written FOR OUR ADMONITION, to whom the consummations [end] of the eons have attained.”

• 1 Corinthians 10:6–11 CLV

⁸ YHWH showed Moses the “pattern” of the Tabernacle. He later gave David a “pattern” of the Temple, written by God’s own hand. Was this a diagram, or written instructions? We cannot know. Again, I suggest you see my article [“The Pattern of the Temple”](#) as well as Dr. Martin’s article, originally from 1977 and updated by me in 2004: [“Temple Symbolism in Genesis.”](#) DWS