

1 SAMUEL 4:1-11

MAKING
GOD
AN IDOL

Elder James Lee
17 November 2024

1 SAMUEL 4:1-11 (NASB 1995)

... Now Israel went out to meet the Philistines in battle and camped beside Ebenezer while the Philistines camped in Aphek. ² The Philistines drew up in battle array to meet Israel. When the battle spread, Israel was defeated before the Philistines who killed about four thousand men on the battlefield.

1 SAMUEL 4:1-11 (NASB 1995)

3 When the people came into the camp, the elders of Israel said, “Why has the Lord defeated us today before the Philistines? Let us take to ourselves from Shiloh the ark of the covenant of the Lord, that it may come among us and deliver us from the power of our enemies.”

1 SAMUEL 4:1-11 (NASB 1995)

4 So the people sent to Shiloh, and from there they carried the ark of the covenant of the Lord of hosts who sits above the cherubim; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were there with the ark of the covenant of God.

1 SAMUEL 4:1-11 (NASB 1995)

⁵ As the ark of the covenant of the Lord came into the camp, all Israel shouted with a great shout, so that the earth resounded. ⁶ When the Philistines heard the noise of the shout, they said, “What does the noise of this great shout in the camp of the Hebrews mean?” Then they understood that the ark of the Lord had come into the camp.

1 SAMUEL 4:1-11 (NASB 1995)

7 The Philistines were afraid, for they said, “God has come into the camp.” And they said, “Woe to us! For nothing like this has happened before.

1 SAMUEL 4:1-11 (NASB 1995)

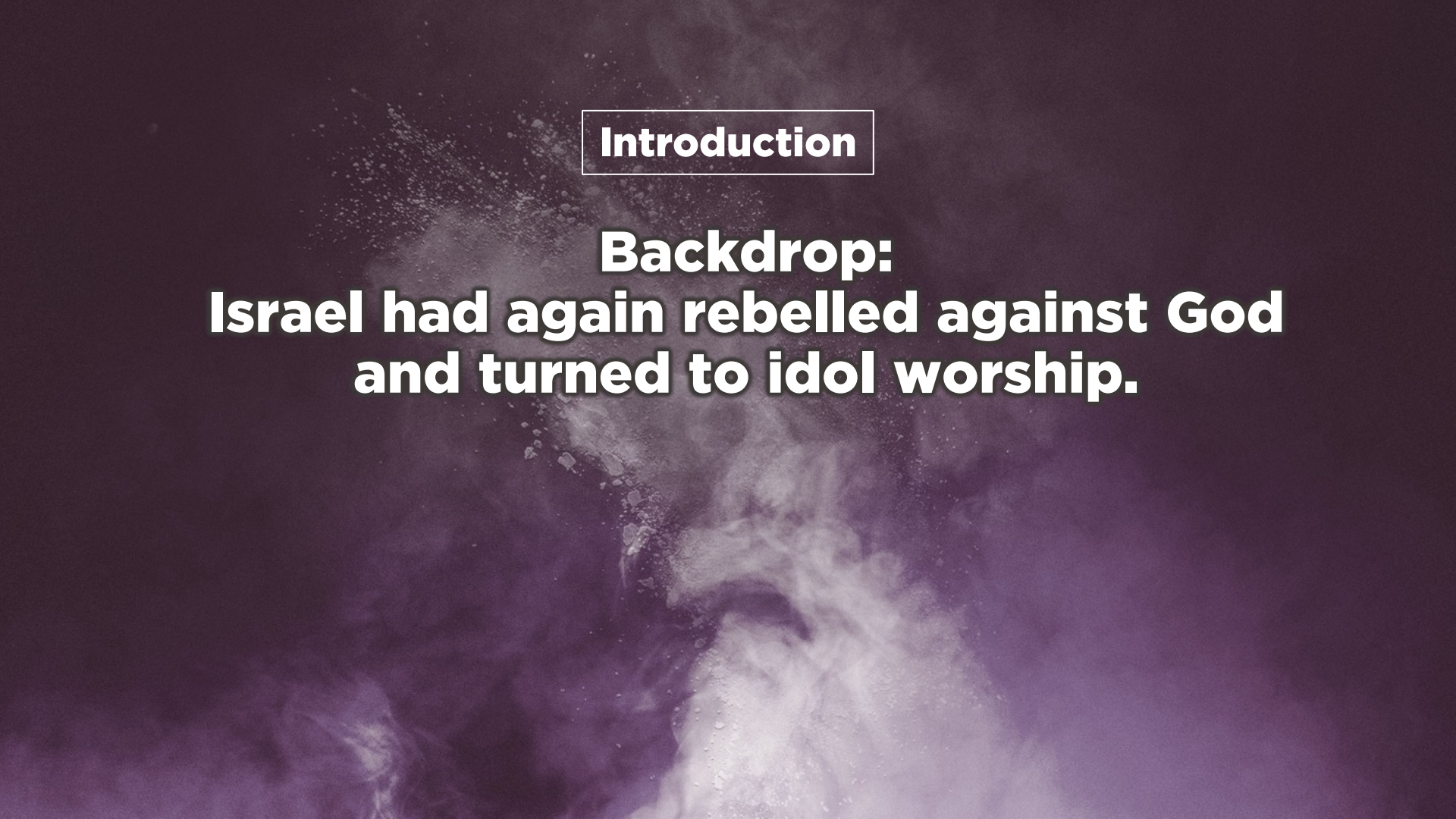
⁸ Woe to us! Who shall deliver us from the hand of these mighty gods? These are the gods who smote the Egyptians with all kinds of plagues in the wilderness. ⁹ Take courage and be men, O Philistines, or you will become slaves to the Hebrews, as they have been slaves to you; therefore, be men and fight.”

1 SAMUEL 4:1-11 (NASB 1995)

¹⁰ So the Philistines fought and Israel was defeated, and every man fled to his tent; and the slaughter was very great, for there fell of Israel thirty thousand foot soldiers. ¹¹ And the ark of God was taken; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, died.



Introduction



Introduction

Backdrop:
Israel had again rebelled against God
and turned to idol worship.

Introduction

- **Israel had come under attack from the Philistines.**
- **4,000 Israelite soldiers died.**
- **Elders of Israel decided to go up against the Philistines again.**

Introduction

- **Bring along the Ark of the Covenant of God.**
- **Elders believed victory will be guaranteed.**

Introduction

- **Even they believed that Israel was going to defeat them.**
- **Israel was defeated again!**
- **30,000 were killed**
- **Ark of the Covenant captured by the Philistines.**

The background of the slide is a dark, textured image of an explosion or a large fire. A bright, white and yellow flame or smoke plume rises from the bottom center, surrounded by dark, billowing smoke and debris. The overall color palette is dark purple, black, and grey, with the bright light of the explosion providing a stark contrast.

Introduction

Complete disaster for Israel
What went wrong?

Introduction

They had approached God in the same manner as how they approached the idols they had been worshipping.

Introduction

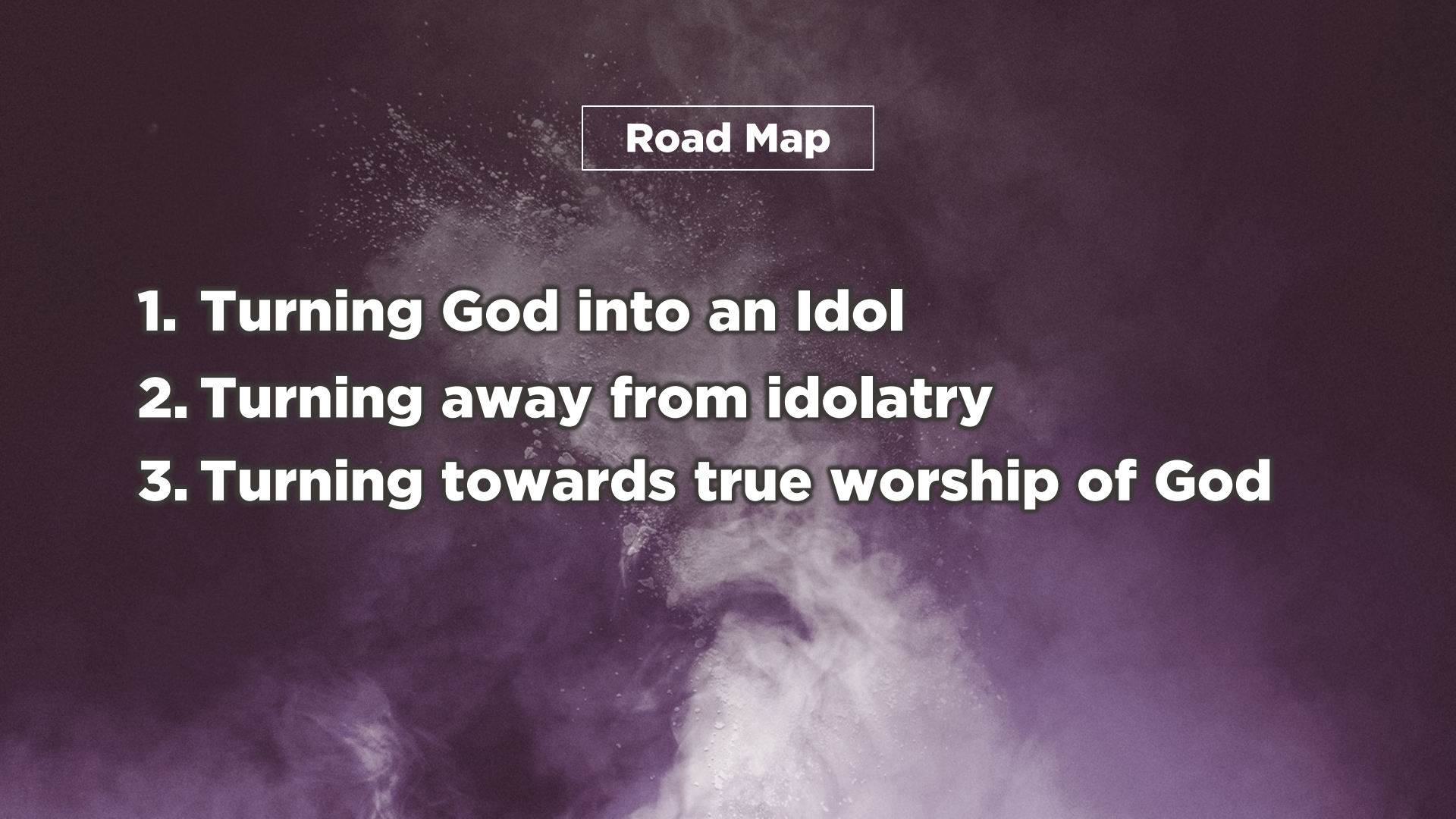
Important lesson:

**While it may be right for us to turn
to God, the way we go about
doing it can be completely wrong.**

Introduction

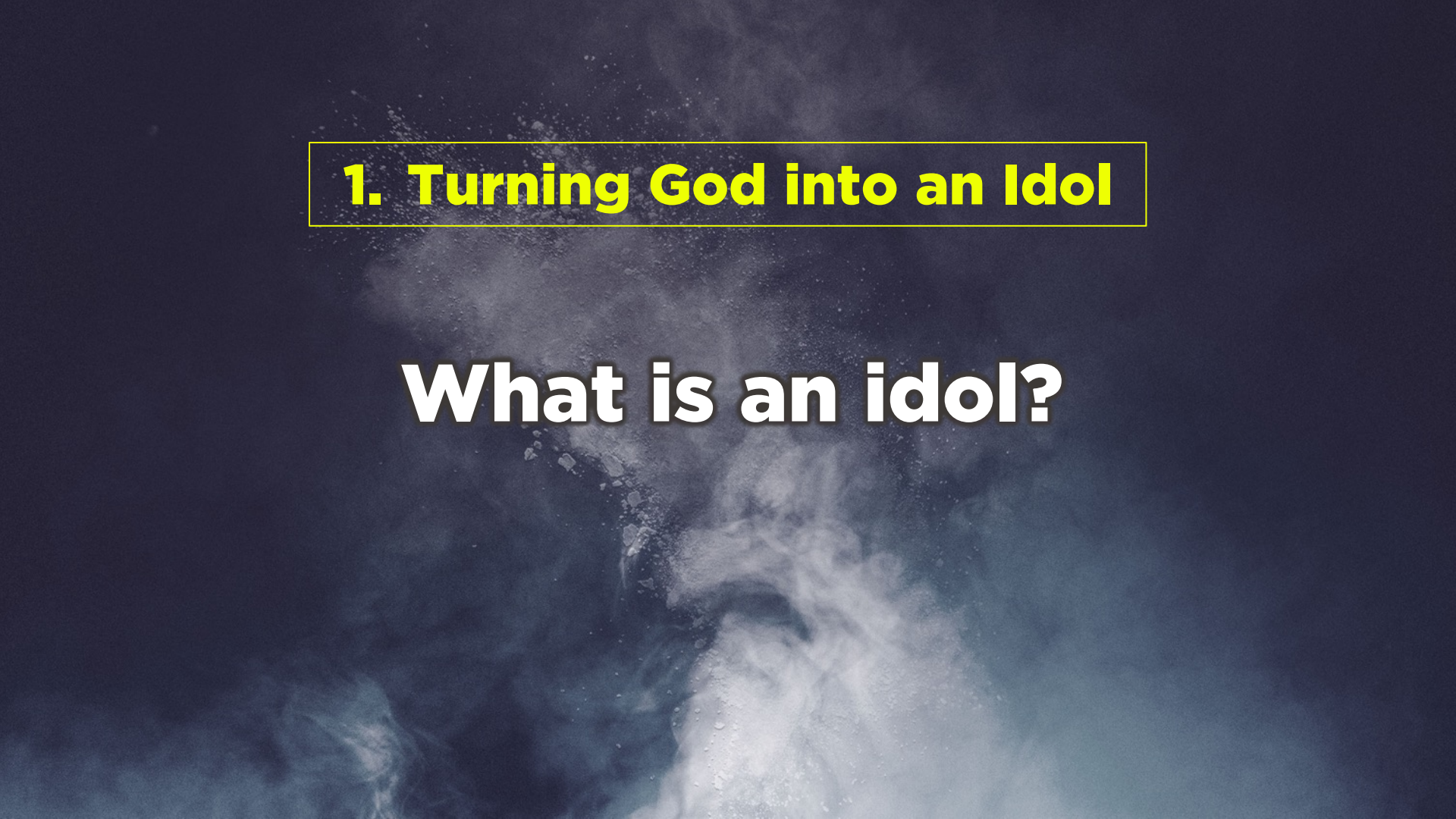
Important lesson:

**While we may appear outwardly
to be looking towards God,
our inward posture may be
focused only on ourselves.**



Road Map

- 1. Turning God into an Idol**
- 2. Turning away from idolatry**
- 3. Turning towards true worship of God**

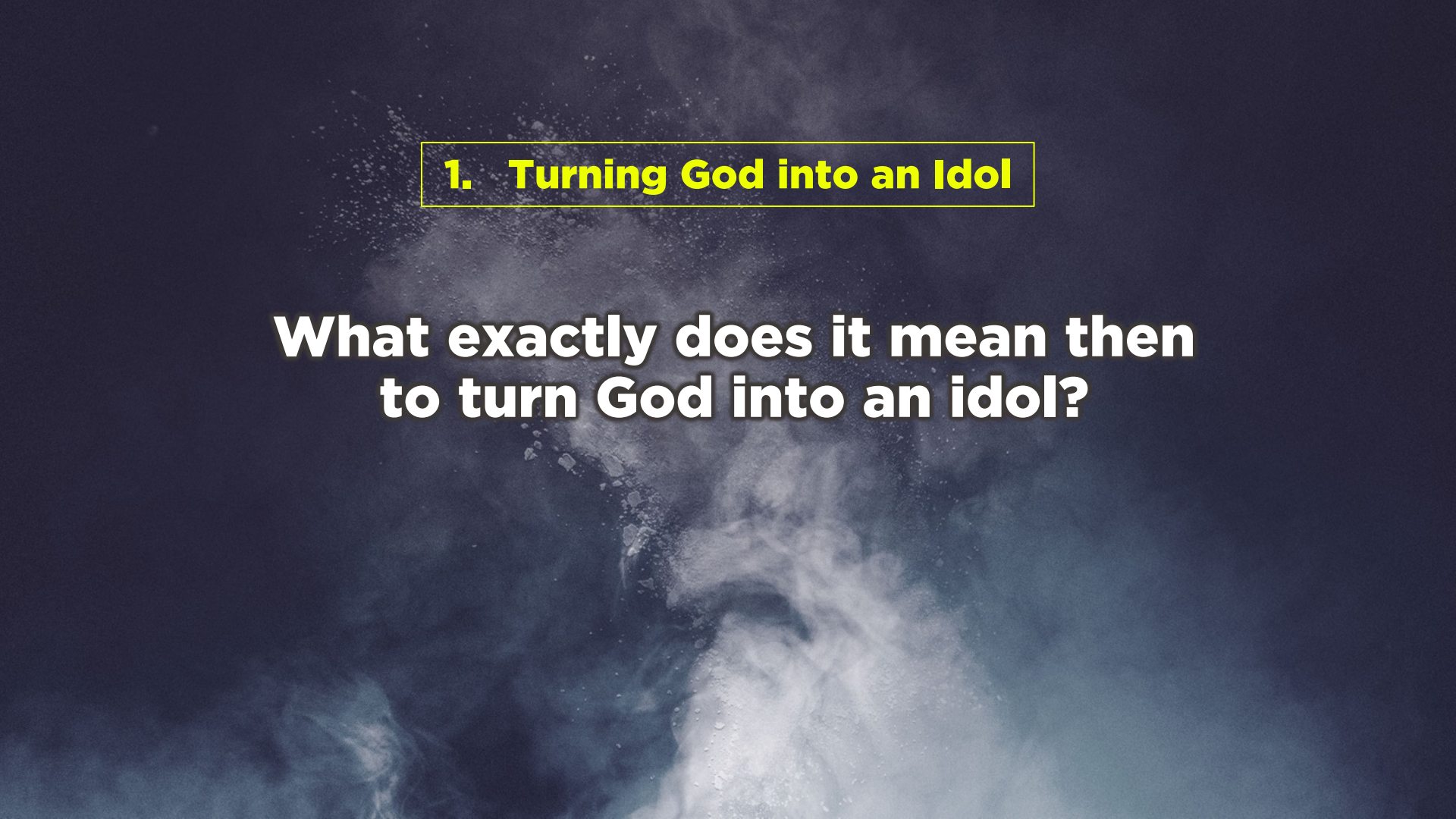


1. Turning God into an Idol

What is an idol?

1. Turning God into an Idol

- **An idol has been defined as:**
 - **anything that we come to rely on for some blessing**
 - **or help**
 - **or guidance in the place of a wholehearted reliance on the true and living God**



1. Turning God into an Idol

**What exactly does it mean then
to turn God into an idol?**

EXODUS 20:4-5 (NASB 1995)

“You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. ⁵ You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, ...”

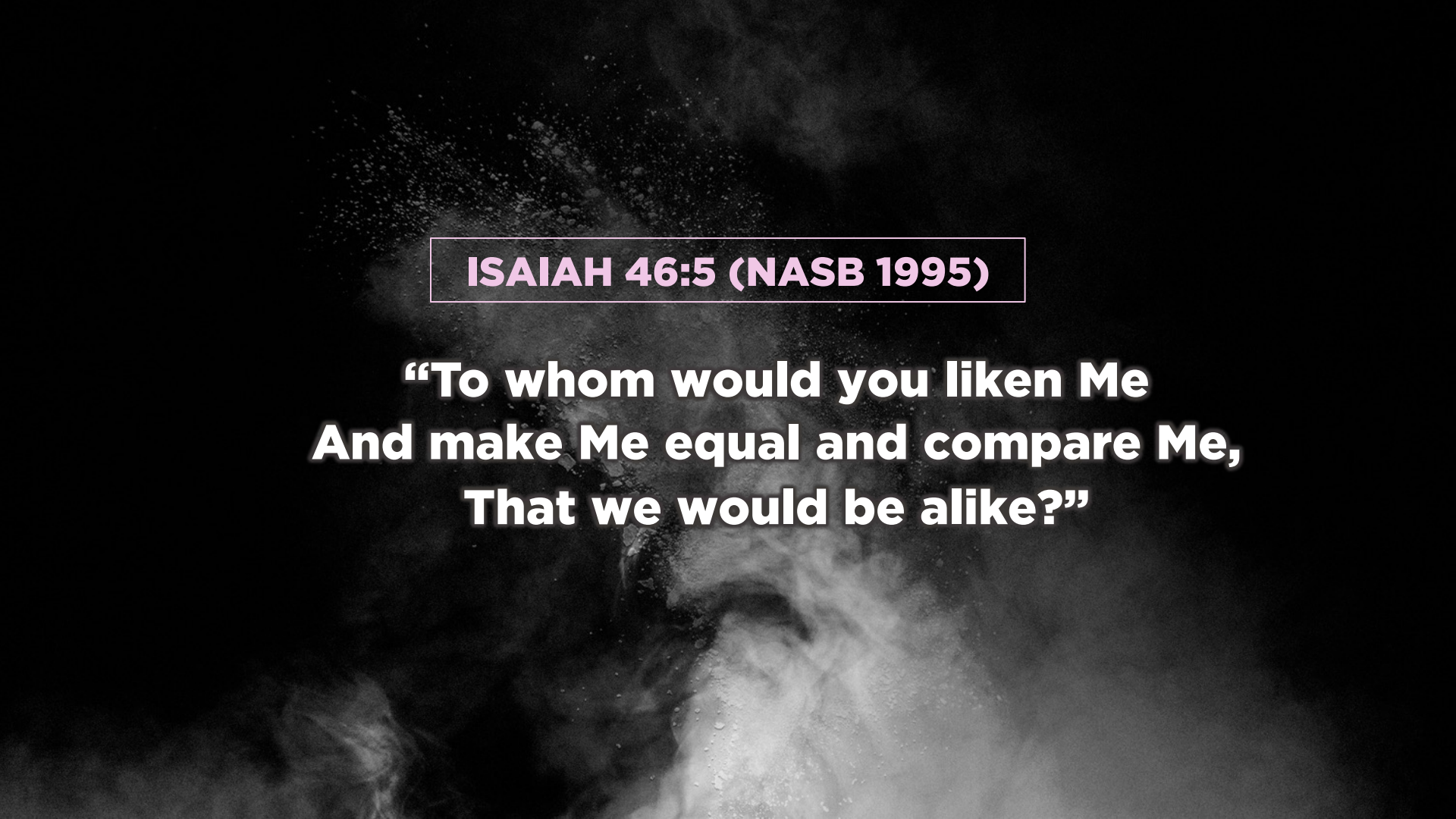
1. Turning God into an Idol

- **The commandment applies not just to false gods being represented as statues, but also representing God with some man made object.**
- **Golden Calf Statue**



1. Turning God into an Idol

Why was God so angry with Israel for making a statue to represent Him?



ISAIAH 46:5 (NASB 1995)

**“To whom would you liken Me
And make Me equal and compare Me,
That we would be alike?”**

1. Turning God into an Idol

- **God is not our genie in a lamp or bottle.**
- **He does not exist only to serve us and make us happy and fulfil all our dreams and desires.**

1. Turning God into an Idol

- **When things don't go our way.**
- **“God doesn't care”**
- **“How can God allow this to happen?”**
- **“Is God real?”**

1. Turning God into an Idol

- **God has not behaved according to our expectations.**
- **God is no longer easy and comfortable.**
- **Many Christians don't know how to deal with that.**

1. Turning God into an Idol

- **We turn God into an idol when we expect God to behave in a way that we want Him to and in a way that we can understand.**
- **That is not God – just a figment of our imagination.**



1. Turning God into an Idol

Any self-created idea of who God is will ultimately disappoint us

MATTHEW 7:21-23 (NASB 1995)

21 “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. 22 Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’

MATTHEW 7:21-23 (NASB 1995)

23 And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.'

2. Turning away from idolatry

- **3 main reasons why we turn God into an idol**
- **“I”, “Me” and “Myself”**
- **Turning God into an idol fundamentally is about putting ourselves first.**

2. Turning away from idolatry

- **If God really love us that much, surely He would want us to be happy and successful, right?**

2. Turning away from idolatry

- **That, however, is not what the gospel is all about.**
- **The gospel is about us dying to our carnal sinful self and God changing us from within and making us truly alive again.**

2. Turning away from idolatry

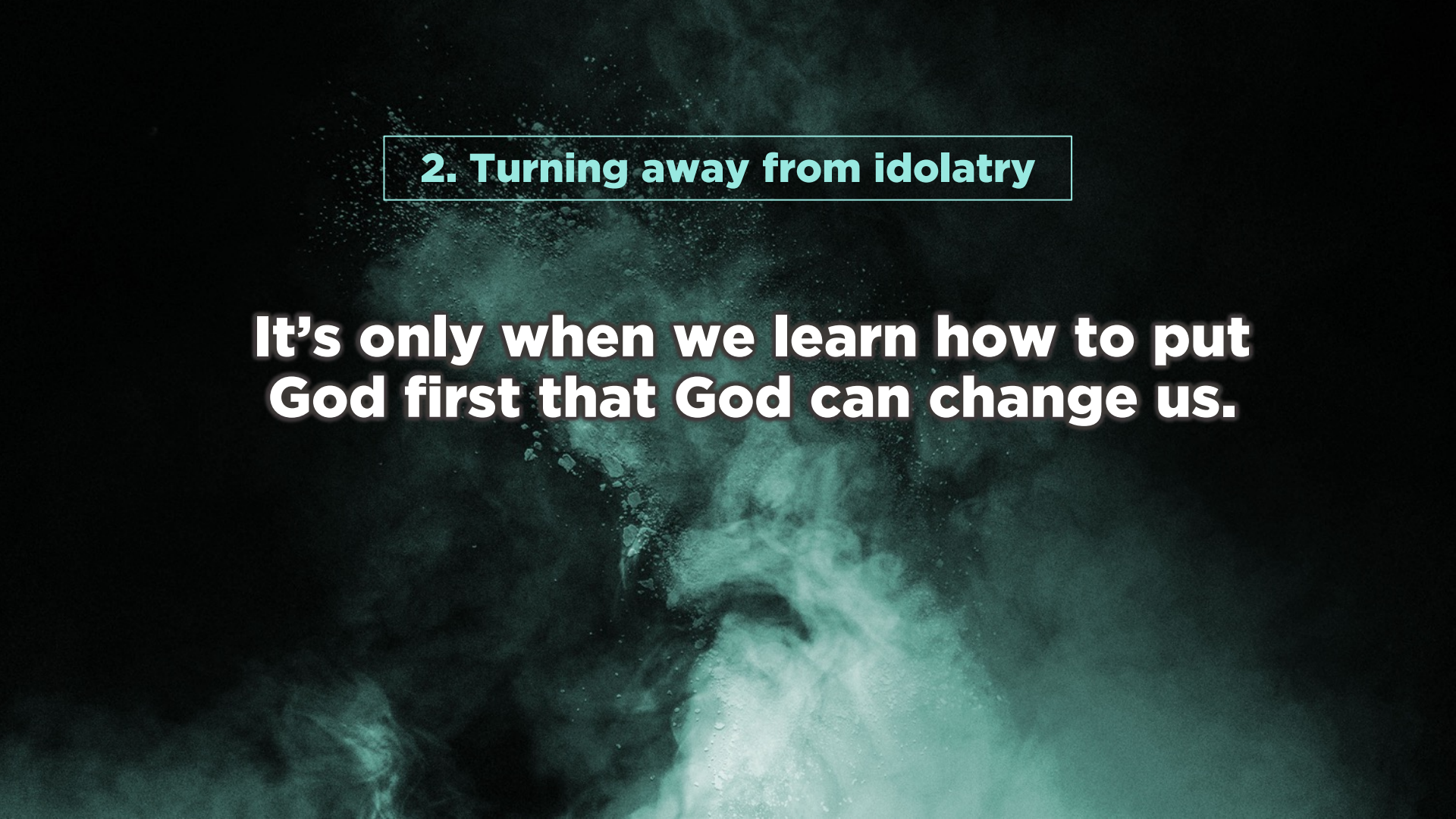
- **The gospel is about God's kingdom coming into our world and transforming it and eventually restoring it to what it was originally meant to be.**

2. Turning away from idolatry

- **Its fundamentally not about achieving happiness in this life but ultimate fulfilment in a far more glorious and eternal future.**

2. Turning away from idolatry

- **Matthew 6:33**
 - **as we seek God's kingdom,
everything that we need in this
world will be added unto us**



2. Turning away from idolatry

**It's only when we learn how to put
God first that God can change us.**

2. Turning away from idolatry

- **The biggest idol in our hearts is ourselves**
- **Eve's mind when she decided to disobey God in the Garden of Eden**

3. Turning towards true worship of God

**We are to worship God
in spirit and in truth.
(John 4:23-24)**

3. Turning towards true worship of God

**Starts with having
the right perspective
of who God is.**

3. Turning towards true worship of God

**Learn how to humble ourselves
before Him.**

**God must increase and
we must decrease.**

3. Turning towards true worship of God

When we learn how to humble ourselves before God we are then able to put aside our own life agenda.

3. Turning towards true worship of God

**We can face the most difficult
and perplexing situations in
our lives and still have the
abiding peace of
God's presence.**

3. Turning towards true worship of God

**We can begin to understand
what it means to worship God
in spirit and in truth.**

3. Turning towards true worship of God

**When we worship God
in spirit and in truth,
transformation takes place
in our hearts and in our lives.**

3. Turning towards true worship of God

**That is how God's kingdom
is ushered into this
world through us.**



CONCLUSION