

#### THE SECOND COMMANDMENT

"You shall not make for yourself an **image** in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below.

You shall **not bow down to them or worship them**; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments."

Exodus 20:4-6 (NIV); also Deuteronomy 5:8-10.

#### **♥ OVERVIEW**

- Images that are in any way connected to worship are totally forbidden. They are an expression of hatred toward God.
- This command represents all our obligations related to images (whether physical or mental), as they pertain to God and worship.

## COMMANDMENT #2 - SO FAR, WE'VE SEEN...

### ⇒ Making images of the *uncreated* God is strictly forbidden.

- God *cannot* be visibly portrayed in *any* way. It's simply not possible, without *distorting* who he is.
- A Making images of created objects is not forbidden.
- They can be used for teaching or as reminders. But they cannot be used for the purpose of worship, or for serving God through them.
- ⇒ Using images in the church, as a <u>substitute</u> for teaching the message of Scripture is also forbidden.
  - ("Images" can include pictures, statues, stained-glass windows, video productions, and any other means of symbolically representing something in Scripture.)
  - The problem is when "substitution" occurs; for God commands that <u>Scripture must be taught.</u> Images, if used, CANNOT be a substitute for teaching God's Word.

#### ISSUES THAT STILL NEED CONSIDERED.

#### ⇒ What about physical images of *Jesus* (pictures, statues, videos, etc.)?

- Images of the invisible God are forbidden. But what about Jesus?
   After all, he was also a visible human. Is making images of the human Jesus a violation of this command?
- ⇒ What else does Scripture tell us about "mental images" and worship?
- Though we have already mentioned the connection of this command to worship (which may involve mental images), most of our focus has been on visible images.
- If "no images" is the "negative" obligation, is there a "positive" obligation implied by the commandment?
- ⇒ What is the reason for the verses about God punishing people (Exodus 20:5-6)?

### TODAY:

## What about images of Jesus (pictures, statues, etc.)?

(Also some comments applicable to images in general.)

- The second commandment forbids images of the invisible creator God. But what about Jesus? Though he is God, he took on a visible human body. It isn't a temporary situation (as sometimes occurred in the Old Testament), but a permanent situation.
- A visible Jesus exists right now though not on earth. In the future, all
  will see him visibly.

[STEPHEN, THE FIRST MARTYR.] "Look," he said, "I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."

Acts 7:56 (BSB)

[WHEN JESUS RETURNS.] Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him."

Revelation 1:7 (CSB)

### ⇒ There are two main views that have been very strongly held:

- "YES!" Down through the centuries, there have been many in the church who greatly encouraged the use of images – not only of Jesus, but of many other things that are found in the Bible (people, events, symbolism, etc.). This is probably the most common view.
  - ✓ Unfortunately, it sometimes became a <u>substitute</u> for Scripture itself. And the objects often became associated with worship (as an "aid" to worship, or even something that was being prayed to.)
- "NO!" There have been others who have taken the opposite view.
   They not only opposed images, but some did everything they could to destroy them.
  - This may be due to the idolatry they observed, and the realization that those doing it would *perish* eternally, because of it. They also saw, in Scripture, that Israel was told to destroy images that were being used for worship.
- ["SOMETIMES!" Others had views somewhere in-between these two.]

## How should we respond?

#### ⇒ PHYSICAL images (in general).

- They may range from symbolic to life-like, and may influence (for better or worse) one's perspective of what is being imaged – especially if they are portrayed as "real" representations of what is being imaged.
- They can become a means of worship a violation of the prohibition against idolatry.

#### ⇒ PHYSICAL images of Jesus.

- They are based on *imagination*, not on a description of Jesus found in Scripture.
- People who create these images will be influenced ① by the
  culture they live in, ② by their values, understanding of the
  Bible and attitude toward God, and even ③ by their artistic
  ability.

#### MENTAL images of Jesus – they exist... we can't avoid them!

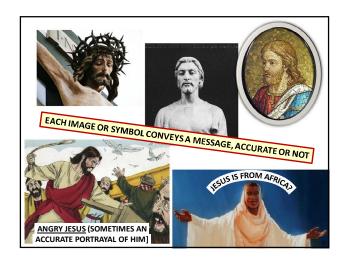
- It's nearly impossible to think about Jesus without having some type of *mental* image of him!
- **EXAMPLES:** Try thinking about the following situations without having an image of Jesus in your "mental picture" of the event:
  - ✓ Jesus walking on the water, telling Peter to come to him Matthew 14:25-32.
- ✓ Jesus overturning the tables of the money changers in the temple Matthew 21:12.
- ✓ Jesus washing the disciple's feet John 13:3-12+.
- ✓ Jesus ascending into heaven, as the apostles watch it happen Luke 24:50-51; Acts 1:9.
- Differences between mental and physical images of Jesus: We could probably say that the mental image comes and goes, may vary, and does not necessarily define who Jesus is. In contrast, the physical image makes a specific statement about him, and (depending on its "realness") may define and influence our views.

## ⇒ EXAMPLES – PHYSICAL IMAGES: Consider the images of Jesus, on the following pages.

- This includes symbols, drawings, pictures, statues all intended to represent Jesus. Some may be more accurate than others... but none of them will be completely accurate.
- These examples include pictures and statues. You could add audio and video examples, and consider the influence that the voice, mannerisms, and portrayal of Jesus might have on one's perspective of him.













- CAUTIONS: Be aware of the dangers and prohibitions.
  - ✓ Images of the *invisible* God are obviously forbidden.
  - ✓ Though other types of images might be useful for <u>teaching</u>, their use must not go <u>beyond</u> that. They are <u>not</u> to become a means of worship, or an object of worship. (The appearance – aesthetic quality – of the image is not the issue... but what you do with it is.)
- If the image portrays Jesus, be aware of the inaccuracies.
  - NO image accurately portrays Jesus. If people don't realize this, some portrayals may lead them to a wrong understanding of who Jesus is.
  - Any image that portrays Jesus in ways that contradict his moral nature, or anything that Scripture teaches about him, must be rejected.
  - ALL images portray Jesus as a human; yet NONE shows what he looks like <u>now</u>.

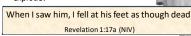
Scripture tells us what Jesus looks like NOW – and no image can represent it!

OH NO!!

I FORGOT MY

CAMERA!

- ✓ The apostle John describes what Jesus looks like NOW.
- ✓ We may wish that John had been able to take a photograph of Jesus... but...
- ✓ What John saw was beyond overwhelming. It would have probably caused the camera to explode!



✓ What John saw could *never* be fully described, even in words.
 ✓ The best he could do was to describe

Jesus in ways that would point our minds in the right direction – though the reality of his appearance would be far beyond what our minds can comprehend.

**EXPLODED!!** 



CENCOR ONE LONG!

[Actually, the picture would have been brighter than this.]

(NO CAMERAS NEEDED)

 No physical image can represent this! This is Jesus, the "Lord of Glory" (1 Corinthians 2:8b), the way he <u>now</u> looks!

... someone like a son of man,

dressed in a **robe**\* reaching down to his feet and with a **golden sash** around his chest.

The hair on his head was white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire.

His **feet** were like **bronze glowing** in a furnace, and his **voice** was like the sound of **rushing waters**.

In his right hand he held seven stars, and coming out of his mouth was a sharp, double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.

Revelation 1:13b-16 (NIV)

\* (Robe = described in Matthew 17:2 as white as the light.)

## Conclusion: Should we use images (especially in the church)?

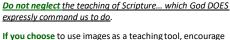
- NO? If you have concluded that images (especially of Jesus) are NOT a good idea...
- ✓ You might find a church where others hold the same view.
- ✓ More likely, you will find yourself surrounded by others who disagree with you. But maybe you can have a positive influence that would help minimize the dangers or abuses that can occur with images (if you do it graciously, as an expression of love).
- There are more serious matters in life to be concerned about including false mental images about God.
- YES? If you are convinced that images are useful ...
  - ✓ Do what you can to prevent the misuses and abuses we have already noted. Turning images into an object of worship, or using them as a means of worship (which includes prayer) can have eternally devastating consequences – and what you do may influence others.

# **YOUR MISSION?**

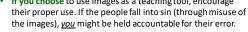
## Here are some suggestions.



- Make every effort to avoid anything that is clearly forbidden, and to do everything that is clearly required.
- Be aware that the use of images for teaching purposes is neither commanded nor forbidden.



expressly command us to do. If you choose to use images as a teaching tool, encourage





Encourage the leaders to fulfil their responsibilities! (Even if they are, you can show that you care.)

## **SOMETHING TO CONSIDER**

As the world becomes increasingly opposed to Jesus, it wants to remove images of Jesus (as well as crosses, the Ten Commandments, etc.) from being visible in public. If the devil doesn't want them, then maybe there is some value in them!





GOD, JESUS.



# Credits

- Scriptures marked "NIV" Scripture quotations taken from The Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc. Tuled by permission. All rights reserved worldwide. (www.biblica.com.)
- marked "CSB" Scripture quotations marked CSB have been taken from the Christian Standard Bible®, Copyright © 2020 by ible Publishers. Used by permission. Christian Standard Bible® and CSB® are federally registered trademarks of Holman Bible
- Scriptures marked "BSB" Taken from The Holy Bible, Berean Standard Bible, BSB; Public Domain (CC BY NC ND). https://bereanbible.com/

PICTURES (original sources; modifications may have been made)

- Brick wall GDJ / CC0; via openclipart.org; https://openclipart.org/detail/227630/brick-texture
- Globe with lit fuse GDJ / CCO; via openclipart.org; https://openclipart.org/detail/219655/political-map-earth-globe-bo
- "The Last Supper" Leonardo da Vinci, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons; https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Leonardo\_da\_Vinci\_(1452-1519)\_-\_The\_Last\_Supper\_(1495-1498).jpg
- Second gage of "Jesus" pictures—to gli Arme Maria. Co ISSA d. of https://crostbecommons.org/licenses/by-as/4.0», via Wikimedia Commons; https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File-Jesus\_am\_Fosus\_re-picts\_vom\_Altar/gig; top certer: National Archives at College Park, Public doman, via Wikimedia Commons; https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File-Jesus\_am\_Fosus\_re-picts\_vom\_Altar/gig; top certer: National Archives at College Park, Public doman, via Wikimedia Oscilians, via Wikimedia Commons; https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File-Jesus\_am\_Fosus\_a

- EDTS (CONTINUED) PICTURES (original sources; modifications may have been made)
  Third page of "Jessas" pictures—Top left: Public domain, via Wikimeda Commons;
  Hips://commons.wikimeda.cop/wikim/Persant\_depiction of Jessas\_\_Sermon\_on\_the\_Mourt\_pg; top center: Jfl Sedaček Fretile, CD BY-SA 3.0 chttps://commons.wikimeda.cop/wikim/Persant\_depiction\_or\_Jessas\_\_Sermon\_on\_the\_Mourt\_pg; top center: Jfl Sedaček Fretile, CD BY-SA 3.0 chttps://commons.wikimeda.cop/wikim/Persant\_depiction\_or\_Jessas\_\_Sermon\_on\_the\_Mourt\_pg; top center: Jfl Sedaček Fretile, CD BY-SA 2.0 chttps://commons.wikimeda.cop/wikim/Persant\_depiction\_or\_Jessas\_\_Sermon\_or\_Jessas\_\_Jess
- rego-zicommens warmedus org was reen valuerenergi. ""Nu-SacLosen., Jesus "em. Nu-zu. (ju.)go.
  Fifth page of "Neurs" pictures Staried plass window: Euplen Barrand, Public domain, va Wisimedia Commons; intego-zicommons withmedia corpiwis/File-Semon on the mount window gig: redutionary: Bailerne insistomane marchot, CC BY-SA 4.0 dright pictures of the picture of th
- \*\*North statum Luskig Schroder. CO BY-SA 3.0 date; i/create/common.org/iccreate/by-sk3.0 -, da Wikimeds Commons: Histori/commons witemda copwis/firefres/COSBGRO/CASS/SAS/COSBG. Calterwain, N.M. w. NYS-SSS-SCG/SBG.Org/media/u, fu.P.P.B. Becken cames Mark Turnaukas for Akon, CNo, USA, CD, BY 2.0 date; i/create/secommon org/iccrease/by/2.0 -, da Wikimedia Commons: Highs/Commons wikimed acquis/WikimiEs surface/da. Canno, G12\_(2015-05). Cold Create, Public domain, Na Wikimedia Commons: Highs/Commons wikimedia des/WikimiEscul/Google, Arton, Grate Schools, Sansosuci, E144-64-6, With Tameal/grater only Commons: Highs/Commons wikimedia des/WikimiEscul/Google, Arton, Grates Schools, Sansosuci, E144-64-6, With Tameal/grater only (arton organization).
- Namyer Vorne Bentele, Manieradury were vora bestig y fund spell-gertale, Sead-good 16-6-29 mill: grain Manger Vorne Bentele, CC BYSA 4.0 -titps://creativecommons.org/licerses/bys-36-05-05-10-10-10-11-11-11-11-1