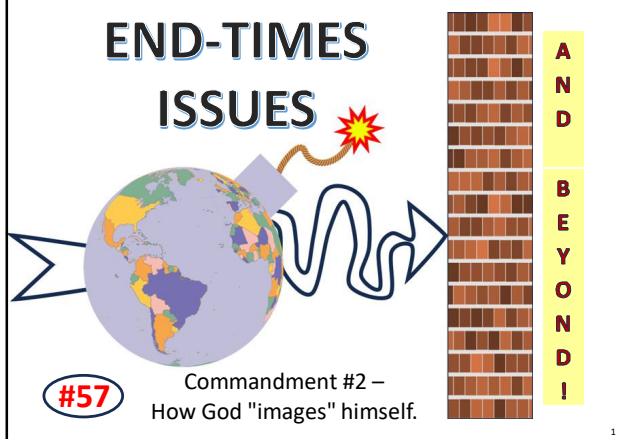


END-TIMES ISSUES



#57 Commandment #2 – How God "images" himself.

1

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.

⇒ **This commandment prohibits:** ① Representing God by images, as well as ② bowing down to them, or worshipping (serving) them.

⇒ **Doing these things** is an expression of *hatred* toward God, and is the *opposite* of loving and obeying him.

★ God's opposition to this sin is very intense. ★

2

⇒ **This command prohibits the making of *physical* images of God.**

- God *cannot* be visibly portrayed in *any* way. It's simply not possible, without *distorting* who he is.

THIS SOUNDS LIKE AN EASY COMMAND TO OBEY! I'D NEVER BOW DOWN TO A STATUE!

ACTUALLY, IT'S EASY TO DISOBEY. "IMAGES" ARE NOT ALWAYS VISIBLE.

⇒ **We also need to consider the issue of *non-physical* images.**

- This is how *God* reveals himself – not by something *visible**, but by *words*. These words reveal a non-physical image of who he is, what he does, our relationship to him, etc.
- This revelation about God – given by God himself, and *not* an image we have made – is to be the basis for our *worship* and *service*.

* (God has revealed himself in Jesus – called the "Word" in John 1:1. This event involved God taking on human flesh.)

3

"Non-physical" or "invisible" images is NOT a new concept!

⇒ **We experience them every day!**

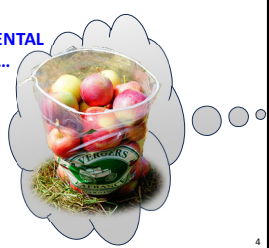
- It occurs when we communicate with *words* – whether spoken or read – or through various non-verbal ways of communication.
- In daily life, the image we perceive can be based on something factual, or it can be fictional in nature. It can be truthful, or it can be a lie.

THE WORDS...

"A BAG OF APPLES"

THE MENTAL IMAGE...

The accuracy of the mental image will depend on the words that are spoken.



4

Every time we *misrepresent* God – in word or thought – we are guilty of violating the Second Commandment.

- As with all the commandments, this Second Commandment represents a *category* of obligations, instructions and commands.

All of our obligations; all of God's instructions and commands

Can be placed into **TEN** categories: the Ten Commandments.

- If desired, we can group these things into even simpler categories.

All of our obligations; all of God's instructions and commands

Can be placed into **TWO** categories: the commands to love God and neighbor.

- In many respects, the *ten* categories are more helpful for teaching us specific issues related to how we are to live.

5

⇒ **HOW DO YOU REPRESENT GOD?**


TO ME, GOD IS ... [PLACE DESCRIPTION HERE].

THE ISSUE IS: DOES YOUR DESCRIPTION OF GOD MATCH GOD'S SELF-DESCRIPTION?

Your description of God ...

Is it based on God's truth...

... or on your opinions?



6

⇒ HOW DOES **GOD** REPRESENT HIMSELF? THROUGH THE **WORD**.

- **Through the Word of God – Scripture**, which can be spoken or read.
- **Through the Word of God – Jesus Christ** (called the Word, John 1:1+). Yet since Jesus is not presently on earth, the only accurate self-description of God is the Word in *written* form.

THE WORLD HATES BOTH OF THESE EXPRESSIONS OF THE "WORD."

- When people saw *Jesus* [the Word of God], they didn't like what they saw (i.e., what he communicated by what he said and did). So they killed him.
- When people are exposed to *Scripture* [the Word of God], they tend to reject it the same way people rejected *Jesus* [the Word of God].
- It is only by the *grace* of God that anyone accepts the Word of God for what it truly is.

7

⇒ THE WORD OF GOD IS **LIVING**.

- *Jesus is alive*, though not physically present on earth.
- *Scripture is also alive*. And *powerful*.



For the word of God is **alive and active**. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it **penetrates** even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it **judges** the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

Hebrews 4:12 (NIV)

The unfolding of **Your words** gives light; ...

Psalms 119:130a (BSB)

... **His powerful word**.

Hebrews 1:3b (BSB)

... the **living and enduring word of God**.

1 Peter 1:23b (BSB)

...the **word of God**, which is indeed **at work in you** who believe.

1 Thessalonians 2:13b (NIV)

8

⇒ THE WORD OF GOD (SCRIPTURE) IS GOD'S SELF-REVELATION.

- God is the ultimate author. (We have looked at this issue in the past.)
- This Word comes to us through the **prophets** and through **Jesus Christ** (by way of the apostles – which includes the apostle Paul).

OLD
TESTAMENT
ERA

NEW
TESTAMENT
ERA

On many past occasions and in many different ways, God spoke to our fathers *through the prophets*.

But in these last days He has spoken to us *by His Son* ...

Hebrews 1:1-2a (BSB)

... the Holy Spirit ... will teach you [apostles] all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.

John 14:26 (NIV)

(GIVEN
THROUGH THE
APOSTLES,
WHO WROTE IT
DOWN)

...the commission God gave me [= Paul] to present to you the word of God in its fullness ...

Colossians 1:25b (NIV)

9

⇒ This is how God reveals himself, since the **visible Jesus** is not currently present.

- When we ① **proclaim** the Word of God, and ② **accept** what it says (which results in obeying it), and ③ **love** the God revealed in it ...

Then **God's presence is among us!**

But if an unbeliever or uninstructed person comes in while everyone is prophesying [= speaking the truth about God], he will be convicted and called to account by all, and the secrets of his heart will be made known. So he will fall facedown and worship God, proclaiming, **"God is truly among you!"**

1 Corinthians 14:24-25 (BSB)

The one who keeps God's commands lives in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that **he lives in us**: We know it by the Spirit he gave us.

1 John 3:24 (NIV)

If the Spirit is in us, his "fruit" (Galatians 5:22-23) will also be in us.

10

⇒ What does God's self-revelation (Scripture) tell us?

- We have 66 books (the Bible) that tell us about God (directly or indirectly). They reveal who God is, what he is like, his relation to us, etc.

- ✓ What is he like? Who is he?
- ✓ What is his relationship to creation? To us?
- ✓ How does he interact with us? Examples of this.
- ✓ How does he respond to our sin?
- ✓ What is his will for us? Why?
- ✓ What has he done in the past? In the present? What will he do in the future?

- God reveals all this (and more) about himself, *in his Word*.



This is the God we are to worship/serve and bow down before.



11

⇒ ANY OTHER SUPPOSED "IMAGE" OF GOD IS COUNTERFEIT.

- If it's not **God's Word**, it's an **imagination**.

Tell those who prophesy out of **their own imagination**: Hear the word of the LORD! This is what the Lord GOD says: Woe to the foolish **prophets who follow their own spirit, yet have seen nothing**.

Ezekiel 13:2b-3 (BSB); also v. 17+.

- Old and New Testaments *both* warn us about false teachers and false prophets. *It's an ongoing warning*. [Are **you** watching out for such people? If not, then you won't recognize them when they come.]

Now there were also false prophets among the people, just as **there will be false teachers among you**.

2 Peter 2:1a (BSB)

... and **many false prophets will arise** and mislead many.

Matthew 24:11 (BSB)

12

- People can say what they want, and *claim* that their message is from God. But in the end, their dreamed-up stories will be smashed and burned. God's Word will prevail!

"Let these false prophets tell their dreams,
but let my true messengers faithfully proclaim my every word.
There is a difference between **straw** and **grain**!

Does not **my word burn like fire**?" says the LORD.

"Is it not **like a mighty hammer**
that smashes a rock to pieces?

"Therefore," says the LORD, "**I am against these prophets** who steal messages from each other and claim they are from me. **I am against these smooth-tongued prophets** who say, 'This prophecy is from the LORD!' **I am against these false prophets**. Their imaginary dreams are flagrant lies that lead my people into sin. I did not send or appoint them, and they have no message at all for my people. I, the LORD have spoken!"

Jeremiah 23:28-32 (NLT)

13

- Why is God so opposed to false prophets/teachers?** ⇨ He did not send them. They lie and deceive those who listen to them.

"The prophets are **prophesying lies in My name...** **I did not send them or appoint them or speak to them.** They are **prophesying to you a false vision, a worthless divination, the futility and delusion of their own minds.**"

"Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you.
They are **filling you with false hopes.**

They speak **visions from their own minds,**
not from the mouth of the LORD.

They keep saying to those who despise Me,
'The LORD says that you will have peace,
and to everyone who walks in the stubbornness of his own heart,
'No harm will come to you.'

Jeremiah 14:14; 23:16-17 (BSB)

14

- People may *like* what the false teacher says; but their acceptance of those words does not make those words truthful.

For a time is coming when people will **no longer listen to sound and wholesome teaching.** **They will follow their own desires and will look for teachers who will tell them whatever their itching ears want to hear.** They will **reject the truth and chase after myths.**

2 Timothy 4:3-4 (NLT)

WE WANT A
"POSITIVE"
MESSAGE!

I LOVE
PROSPERITY
AND
BLESSING!

A LOVING GOD
WOULD **NEVER** SEND
PEOPLE TO HELL!!

JUST TELL ME THAT GOD
LOVES ME THE WAY I AM! I
DON'T LIKE BEING TOLD I HAVE
TO TURN AWAY FROM SIN!

SIN, REPENTANCE
AND JUDGMENT ...
TOO NEGATIVE!

15

- Their message may be popular; but when it's not based on Scripture, *that's* what matters.

For they mouth **empty, boastful words** and, by appealing to the lustful desires of the flesh, **they entice people** who are just escaping from those who live in error.

2 Peter 2:18 (NIV)

IT SOUNDS SO
WONDERFUL AND
ENCOURAGING!

[UNFORTUNATELY,
IT'S **FALSE**
ENCOURAGEMENT.]

⇨ WARNING:

- If one's message is in any way *different* from God's revelation in Scripture, it's FALSE.
- If it's *identical* to the message of Scripture, then it's not needed. In that case, WE MIGHT AS WELL GO DIRECTLY TO SCRIPTURE, rather than placing our faith in what *humans* say!

16

It's easy for people to have a false non-physical image of God.

⇨ **The PROBLEM is our *sinfulness*... which results in a *natural* inclination for us to break the Second Commandment!**

- It is **natural** for us to NOT like the way God describes himself.
- It is **natural** for us to want to replace the true God with an image that more closely resembles *what we want* in a god.
 - ✓ In the past, people often represented that "image" with a physical object.
 - ✓ Today, we tend to represent it with a non-physical (mental) image.
- Even when we base our views about God on the Bible, it is **natural** for us to focus on the descriptions we *like*, and to downplay or ignore those we *don't like*.

HOW ABOUT
SOME EXAMPLES?

17

⇨ **It is natural for people to NOT like the way God reveals himself.**
EXAMPLES:

- The Second Commandment itself is an example!

"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.

- People tend to like the "love to a thousand generations" part (even if they *don't* love and obey God!) ... but they take offense with the "jealous" and "punishing the children" parts.

18

- Here's another example – God's "self disclosure" of who he is:

And [God] passed in front of Moses, proclaiming,
"The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious
God, slow to anger, abounding in love and
faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and
forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin."

Yet he **does not leave the guilty unpunished**; he
punishes the children and their children for the sin of
the parents to the third and fourth generation."

Exodus 34:6-7 (NIV)

- ✓ Many people take offense with the "punishment" part.
But how does a God-honoring person respond?

Moses **bowed** to the ground at once and **worshiped**.

Exodus 34:8 (NIV)

19

When we reject God's self-revelation of who he is:

**The Second Commandment warns us: False depictions of
God are expressions of HATE.**

"... those who **hate** me..."

Exodus 20:5b (NIV); also Deuteronomy 5:9b.

BUT I DON'T CALL
IT "HATE"!

TO ME, IT'S JUST A MATTER
OF MAKING GOD **RELEVANT**
TO MODERN TIMES!

UNSAVED PEOPLE WANT A
"FORGIVING" GOD, NOT ONE
WHO JUDGES THEM!

If this
represents
your attitude ...

- ✓ *It would be better to find out why these are characteristics of God, than to ignore, oppose, or lie about them. (We will look at this issue in the future.)*

20

⇒ BEWARE THE DANGER!

- Today, there are *many* false teachers all over the world, who proclaim a different "revelation" of God. Don't be surprised. God warned us about such terrible times – 2 Timothy 3:1; 2 Peter 3:3.
- A terrible judgment awaits them... and those who listen to them.**
- These people may be sincere.* They may be self-deceived into thinking that they are proclaiming God's words. This means ...
- False teachers and false prophets don't always know they are false!**
For many, the day of judgment will be one of *surprise* and terror.

"Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, **did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?**' Then I will tell them plainly, '**I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!**'"

Matthew 7:22-23 (NIV)

- Watch out for them!** Their followers will also have a horrible judgment waiting for them. (Compare to Matthew 23:13, 15; 2 Peter 2:18; Acts 20:29-31; Romans 16:18; etc.)

21

⇒ One more thing:

**HAVING A CORRECT "IMAGE" OF GOD MEANS
MORE THAN HAVING A KNOWLEDGE OF THE RIGHT FACTS!**

- It's not just a matter of having the right *facts* (or "image" of God). We need to have the right *response* to those facts!
- This is where the Second Commandment's words about "bow down" and "worship/serve" find their significance. *These are action words.*
- Even demons have the "fact" part figured out.** They know the truth (James 2:19)! Their problem is that they lack the necessary obedience and love for God.
- Without the proper *response* to how God images himself, we might as well go around bragging that our views about God are as good as the demon's views!

You believe that there is one God. Good! Even
the demons believe that—and shudder.

James 2:19 (NIV)

22

YOUR Mission!

- ⇒ God has revealed to us an **accurate** image
of who he is.

- 👉 **Search the Scriptures!**
- 👉 **Discover that image, and respond properly to it!**

**Worship, serve, and bow down to the God who
has revealed ("imaged") himself in Scripture!**

★ **Tolerate no substitutes!** ★

23

Credits

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24