


END-TIMES ISSUES



#58 Commandment #2 – Positive and negative aspects.

**A
N
D

B
E
Y
O
N
D
!**

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** is about the way we worship God.
- ⚡ The **representative example** in this command involves worship of God by means of a visible image.
- ⚡ The **instructions and commands represented by this commandment** include both "negative" and "positive" statements. They are also related to loving and obeying God.

2

These are **worship** and **loyalty** concepts!

... **bow down** ... **worship** ...

... **love** me and **keep** my commandments...

= REFERS TO OBEDIENCE

= REFERS TO COMMITMENT (NOT EMOTION)

Bowing down – to bow (prostrate or sometimes on the knee),

- ① as an act of honor and respect (if directed toward a person);
- ② as an act of worship, honor, respect, homage (if directed toward deity); also implies allegiance to that deity.

➡ Sometimes translated as "worship."

Worship – to give your energy and devotion to something; this work may involve strenuous activity (perhaps even hardship) –

- ① as a slave devoted to serving a master; ② as a subject devoted to serving God (the King), working in his behalf.

➡ Also translated as "service" (as in *serving* someone).

3

New Testament worship is basically the same concept.

"God is Spirit, and His worshipers must **worship** Him in **spirit** and in **truth**."

John 4:24 (BSB)

Worship of God – ① It's not a matter of location and ritual (even when those have value, as it did in the Old Testament).
② It's connected to our heart attitude – our **spirit**, controlled by the Holy Spirit – and is based on the **truth** of Scripture.

- ✓ It involves recognizing God for who he is, and responding appropriately.
- ✓ It's an expression of allegiance, bowing down before God (in attitude, and possibly with the physical act of bowing down).
➡ Occasionally translated as "bowing down."

★ We acknowledge God's worth, and it determines our response to him. ★

4

The big issue:

⇒ **WHO or WHAT defines** ...

- ✓ Your life.
- ✓ The meaning of your life.
- ✓ How you are to live.
- ✓ The center of focus in your life.

THIS is what you worship/serve/bow down to.

- **For many:** This is an entity that we call "God" (or "god").
- **For others:** They make *themselves* that entity. (They deny the existence of a "god"; and make *themselves* the center focus of their lives.)

Commandment #1 forbids having any god except the God of the Bible.

Commandment #2 forbids worshipping God in any way other than the way he commands. (It also forbids the *worship* of false gods.)

5

The "Second Commandment Category"

⇒ This category **represents the group of teachings, commands and instructions – all related to bowing down and worship/serving.** There are also *examples* (both good and bad) of this being done.

- This includes anything Scripture says about how we are to respond to God, and to the way he "images" himself in Scripture.
- Our response can occur in a **group** setting, as we meet with other Christians, as the "church."
- Our response as **individuals** is an *all-the-time* activity, having an impact on how we live – our **conduct**.

• We will be looking at examples, as well as commands. Examples illustrate ways these obligations are, or aren't, being followed.

6

⇒ These things need to influence how we live.

- We are to live *all the time* in a way that honors God. When we consider all that God has done for us, our "service" (our *all-the-time* worship) is to "sacrifice" ourselves and to live for him. This is why we are told to *honor* God in "everything" (1 Corinthians 10:31).

BECAUSE OF
WHAT GOD
HAS DONE
FOR US...

HOW? START
WITH A
RENEWED
MIND!

Therefore I urge you, brothers, on account of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as **living sacrifices**, holy and pleasing to God, which is your **spiritual service of worship**.

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by **the renewing of your mind**. Then you will be able to test and approve what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God.

Romans 12:1-2 (BSB)

7

- The need to learn (and obey) what Scripture teaches.** This "need to know" has always existed – not only for understanding "Second Commandment concepts," but for *all* of life. *It's a basic obligation in both Old and New Testaments.* **4 EXAMPLES:**

- ✓ **The Law** – They were told to learn it and to teach it to their children – Deuteronomy 32:46-47. "These words are your *life*."
- ✓ **Jesus' teachings** – His followers are to learn and obey all that he commanded – Matthew 28:20.
- ✓ **The apostle's teaching** – The early church was devoted to following it – Acts 2:42.
- ✓ **What Paul taught** – Timothy was told to keep (obey) Paul's instructions – 1 Timothy 6:13-14.

If we're unwilling to find out what Scripture teaches, we will not be capable of obeying these "Second Commandment teachings" in a way that honors God.

8

REMINDER: CAUTION WHEN USING THE TERM "RELIGION."

- This term focuses on what *people* do.
- The unsaved may do it in *an attempt to gain God's favor*. The saved do it as a *response of love and gratitude* – because God has already saved them.
- Christianity itself is *not* a religion. But for followers of Jesus, love for God and neighbor *is* religion – as James 1:26-27 tells us. The term is also used to describe various Old Testament sacrificial activities.
- In contrast, man-made substitutes for Christianity can be described as "religions," because they are nothing more than human activities directed toward false gods (or distortions of the true God).
- Every man-made *substitute* for the worship of God is a "false religion," and dishonors God. But "true religion" (love for God and neighbor) can also dishonor God, if it has been *distorted* unto something different, or is being done with the *wrong motives*, etc.

9

The "POSITIVE" duties of the Second Commandment Category.

The teachings, obligations, and examples related to this show us basic principles we can apply to life.

- The need for Scripture to be read and taught, the need to pay attention to it.** Both collectively and on the individual level.
 - ✓ Rulers need to learn and follow it – Deuteronomy 17:18-19.
 - ✓ The Law of Moses – proclaimed throughout the world (i.e., in all locations where the Jews have been scattered) – Acts 15:21.
 - ✓ Timothy was instructed to "preach the Word" carefully, and at all times – 2 Timothy 4:2.
 - ✓ Cornelius was told (by the angel) to listen to what Peter had to say about God/Jesus – Acts 10:33.
 - ✓ James warns us that we must turn from evil, and accept *and do* what the Word says – James 1:21-22.

10

DO the various expressions of worship, based on the instructions given by God in Scripture.

- A focus on Scripture** – See the previous page.
- Prayer and thanksgiving.** Not only when people have come together for worship, but *all the time, and in all circumstances*.
 - ✓ Philippians 4:6; Ephesians 5:20; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18.
- The sacraments/ordinances.*** (Done mainly when Christians are assembled as a group – as the "church.")
 - ✓ Baptism – Matthew 28:19.
 - ✓ Communion / Lord's Table – 1 Corinthians 11:23-30; Mark 14:22-25.

* (The word you prefer to use will be influenced by your background. It is not our purpose here to debate which term is the "best" to be used.)

11

- Fasting** (if/when applicable).
 - ✓ In connection to repentance, prayer, making major decisions, etc. – Joel 2:12, 18; Luke 7:37; Acts 13:3; 14:23.
- Various other activities and functions that involve interaction with other Christians** – there is a connection between doing these and love for God. We are to build each other up, promote godliness and moral purity, deal with sin, etc., as God has instructed.
 - ✓ **Dealing with sin**, individually or as a group (as the situation requires) – Matthew 18:15-17; 1 Corinthians 5 (example of this being done); Galatians 6:1.
 - ✓ **Using one's gifts and abilities** for the good of others – 1 Corinthians 12:28; Ephesians 4:11-12.
 - ✓ **Honoring those who serve us**, and when appropriate, providing financial help for them – 1 Timothy 5:17-18; 1 Corinthians 9:7-15.

12

INTERACTING WITH OTHER CHRISTIANS: Being assembled together as a "church."

(Certain obligations cannot be fulfilled without it!)

- When possible, we are to set aside a time for meeting with other Christians, ① for worship/service within the *group* context, as well as ② to encourage each other to worship/serve as *individuals*, throughout the rest of the week. (Living in a way that shows our allegiance to the true God is an *everyday* obligation.)
- This might not always be possible in a country where Christianity is severely persecuted. But it is the *normal* obligation for God's people, and is affirmed in Scripture by both commands and examples.

Worship "service"?

- In modern times, people (the "congregation") tend to be passive. But in the New Testament, *participation was expected*.
- Example: The obligation to encourage each other, or to pray for each other is not just the duty of the leader!

13



If we are going to be faithful in these matters, there are also some things we must *oppose*.



DO oppose violations of the Second Commandment.

- Willing to oppose all false forms of worship** (whether involving physical objects or false practices).
- Violations of the second commandment do not have a "right" to exist. We are not to encourage such activity, but must oppose it.
 - ✓ We are not to accept or tolerate false worship – Psalm 16:4 (not participating with them); Acts 17:16-17 (Paul's distress over the idolatry); Acts 14:11-18 (Paul speaks against it).
 - ✓ Those who are in the appropriate leadership positions (in the church) are to put a stop to it – Deuteronomy 7:5 and Isaiah 30:22 (destroying idols); 2 Corinthians 10:5 (demolishing arguments and pretensions); Acts 20:28-31 (a warning).

14

The "NEGATIVE" duties of the Second Commandment Category.

- Violation of this command occurs in two main ways.
 - ✓ **Replacing the true God** with a false god. When doing this, we worship the *image* of that false god. (Some, such as atheists, might replace the "god" with a "non-god.") This also results in a violation of the *First* Commandment.
 - ✓ **Distorting worship** of the true God. Adopting the religious practices of the world's religions; doing what is right, but in wrong ways, or with evil motives, etc.

Down through the centuries, people have invented their own views about God and "spirituality." Instead of doing what *God* has told us to do, they go after rules and activities – methods that *people* have invented. Such practices may seem to promote "spirituality," and may even leave us with "spiritual feelings." But they fail to accomplish what *God* desires to accomplish in our lives.

15

Representing these "negative" categories by pictures.

REPLACEMENT can occur in two main ways:

- ✓ It can be an **obvious substitute** – an opponent or competitor of the true God.



- ✓ It can be a counterfeit, pretending to be the true God. Like a **mask**.

DISTORTION involves worship of the *true* God.

- ✓ But the worship itself has been changed, modified, or corrupted in some manner. In God's eyes, it's just plain **ugly**!



16

PART 1. DO NOT worship substitutes for the true God.

This practice also results in violation of the *First* Commandment, which prohibits us from having those other god(s).

A

- DO NOT replace the true God with a god people have invented.** These false religions do *not* pretend to be Christianity. The end result is worshipping a physical or mental image of that religion's god (even if they don't call it a "god"). [This category is what most people think of, when they talk about "idols."]

Another way this is done:

B

- DO NOT consider false gods as being "co-equal" with the true God.** The true God is not just one of many gods... he is the *only* God.
 - ✓ This is very degrading and offensive to God – to lower him to the level of demons and human inventions.

17

- Worshipping false gods – as a replacement or co-equal of the true God.**

- ✓ Do not encourage others to participate; don't listen to those who do the encouraging – Deuteronomy 13:6-8.
- ✓ Israel and Judah committed this sin, were disciplined, and later destroyed because of it – Micah 6:16 (following the kings' examples); Isaiah 65:3-5 and Jeremiah 44:17 (examples of what they did); 1 Kings 11:33.
- ✓ Doing this is the natural result of rejecting the true God, who has given all people an awareness of his existence – Romans 1:21-23, 25.
- ✓ An example of faithfully refusing to bow down to false gods – Daniel 3:18.
- ✓ An example of the worthlessness of false gods – 1 Kings 18:26-29.
- ✓ It leaves you *not* knowing the true God – Acts 17:22-23.
- ✓ The end result of adopting false gods – it leaves us defiled in God's sight; it's like "spiritual prostitution" – Psalm 106:34-39.

18

C

• **DO NOT worship "modifications" of the true God.**

Some religions *claim* to worship the God of the Bible; but when you examine them closely, you discover that their "god" is a distortion – not the God of the Bible.

- This is common among the cults and some of the false religions that have been invented since Jesus was on earth.
 - ✓ The idolatry of the Northern Israelite kingdom probably began this way – merging worship of the true God and the religious practices of the surrounding nations – 1 Kings 12:33. (By the end, they had totally rejected the true God.)
 - ✓ People who claimed to be Christians, but who denied Jesus Christ's "coming in the flesh" – 2 John 1:7.

WE WORSHIP
THE SAME GOD
THAT YOU DO!

NO! YOUR GOD
IS NOT THE GOD
OF THE BIBLE!

19

D

• **DO NOT pursue "non-religious" or "semi-religious" substitutes, superstitions, naturalistic substitutes, or even "religious principles" that you do not connect to any specific religion.**

- This would include anything else that doesn't exalt the God of the Bible – occult practices, random religious activities, the exaltation of created entities, supposed "scientific" practices that find their root in religious activities, etc.
- The practices of atheists (and similar groups) belong in this category. They exalt *something* over the true God, whether it's themselves, a force of nature, society as a whole, an unidentified alien being...
- Today, many self-help and "spiritual enrichment" techniques have been invented, which are *not* found in the Bible.
 - ✓ Following rules and regulations that are supposed to induce "spirituality" – Colossians 2:21-23.
 - ✓ The moral fool who claims there is no God – Psalm 14:1.

20

PART 2. DO NOT distort worship of the true God.

This is a tendency among people who claim to follow the true God. They aren't always heretical in what they *say*, but what they *do* is the problem. It just doesn't match what God says we are to do.

A

- **Some adopt the methods of the false religions.**
 - Their "worship" is often based on techniques that the *world* uses – techniques that often have an *appearance* of "spirituality."
 - ✓ God *hates* the worship practices of the false religions – Deuteronomy 12:30-32 (especially the extremely vile practices).
 - ✓ Israel committed this sin, when they worshiped the golden calf, representing the God who delivered them from Egypt – Exodus 32:5, 8.

21

B

• **Some claim to follow the methods of worship that are approved by God; but they "pollute" them.** They do them the wrong way, with the wrong attitude, for the wrong reasons, etc.

- They often use the *same* words, but what they mean by those words is not what *God* meant, when he used those words. (They often seem to *redefine* the words.)
 - ✓ Israel offered defiled sacrifices to God. Doing this was basically an expression of *contempt* for God – Malachi 1:6-14.
 - ✓ Contempt – making light of service to God – Malachi 1:7, 13; Matthew 22:5 (a parable).
 - ✓ The religious leaders claimed they were honoring God, but they were actually promoting rules invented by people – Matthew 15:9.
 - ✓ Paul did this type of thing... before God saved him – Galatians 1:13-14.
 - ✓ Do not "babble," and call it "prayer" – Matthew 6:7.

22

[Distortions – ...]

- ✓ Giving God less than what he deserves (= robbing God) – Malachi 3:10.
- ✓ King Saul considered expediency and religious activities to be more important than obeying God. Because of this, God took the kingdom away from him – 1 Samuel 13:11-12; 15:21. "Good intentions" are not enough.

C

• **Hindering worship or using it for personal gain.**

- ✓ Mistreatment or defilement of sacred things (= sacrilege) – Romans 2:22.
- ✓ Doing religious activities in order to get praise from people – Matthew 6:1+; 23:5-7.
- ✓ Using the things of God for personal advantage; paying for position or privilege (= simony) – Acts 8:18.
- ✓ Opposing or trying to stop the work of God – Matthew 23:13; Acts 13:44-45; 1 Thessalonians 2:15-16.

23

HOW should we worship, when in a group setting?

- **First, make sure you are worshipping the true God.**
 - ✓ The Israelites were instructed to wear tassels on their garments, and use them as a *reminder* to be faithful to God's commandments – Numbers 15:38.
 - ✓ Most people (especially non-Jews) don't wear tassels to remind them about obeying Scripture. But we should be hiding Scripture in our *hearts*! – Psalm 119:11.
 - ✓ Israel was *shown* that God had no visible form... so don't make an image to represent him! – Deuteronomy 4:15-19.
 - ✓ Here is a good principle to follow, when determining what God is like (his "image") and how to worship him → "Do not add to Scripture or subtract from it" – Deuteronomy 4:2 (this is actually relevant to *all* of life).

24

- **What types of activities should we include in worship?**


Down through the centuries, people have argued over "how" public worship is to be conducted. God has commanded that certain specific things are to be done. But what about doing *other* things? Are they permitted, or forbidden?

Two perspectives on this issue.

- **The "regulative principle":** Some people claim that we are to do *only* the things that are required by Scripture – and nothing more. They say that direct statements in Scripture "regulate" what we are to do.
- **The "normative principle":** Others claim that we can do anything that is not prohibited by Scripture. They say we are to be guided by Scripture's "norms" – that is, anything compatible with biblical standards.

25

- **Which principle should we follow?** Ultimately, you (the church) have to decide. Here are some issues to consider:

- ✓ If you choose to follow the "**regulative principle**," make sure that you actually do what Scripture tells you to do! There will still be room for some variation in the specific ways that those things are done.
- ✓ If you believe that the "**normative principle**" is the best option, you *also* need to do what Scripture tells you to do! If you choose to do additional things, ① make sure they are compatible with the teachings of Scripture. Also, ② make sure they are of value to your worship. ③ When making choices, consider the "principles of freedom" that we have examined in the past – which are given here in summary form: 
- ✓ Whatever your conclusion, you'll probably meet other Christians who hold to a different viewpoint ... and you'll need to accept them in Christian love.

26



Of all the *possible* things we could do in public worship, only *beneficial* things should be done.

Things may be "lawful," but...

"All things are lawful for me"
—but **not everything is beneficial.**

"All things are lawful for me"
—but **I will not be controlled by anything.**

1 Corinthians 6:12 (NET)

"Everything is lawful," but **not everything is beneficial.**

"Everything is lawful," but **not everything builds others up.**
Do not seek your own good, but the good of the other person.

1 Corinthians 10:23-24 (NET)

- ❖ **Is it *beneficial*?** Is there any value in doing it – either for me (as in 1 Corinthians 6:12) or for others (as in 1 Corinthians 10:23)?
- ❖ **What effect will it have on *me*?** Will it *control* me? Will I become a "slave" to it?
- ❖ **What effect will it have on *other people*?** Will it *build them up*?

27

Your MISSION

[Many other verses could be added to these lists.
We just picked a few to illustrate the categories.]

REGARDING THE "SECOND COMMANDMENT CATEGORY":

Examine your life.

Who (or what) influences the choices you make?



Are you learning to serve God in all that you do?

OR

Is something else the primary "controlling factor" in your life?

28

Your MISSION

REGARDING THE TEN COMMANDMENTS (in general):

Become familiar with viewing the Ten Commandments as representing *ten categories* of commands, instructions, obligations, and examples.



This will help you in recognizing how Bible concepts fit together.
Based on this, you might find it easier to decide responses in situations where you are unsure how to respond.

29

Credits

SCRIPTURE

- Scriptures marked "NIV" - Scripture quotations taken from The Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®, Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide. (www.biblica.com)
- Scriptures marked "NET" - The Scriptures quoted are from the NET Bible® https://netbible.com copyright ©1996, 2019 used with permission from Biblical Studies Press, L.L.C. All rights reserved.
- Scriptures marked "BSS" - Taken from The Holy Bible, Berean Standard Bible, BSS; Public Domain (CC BY NC ND). https://bbsbible.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 / CC0; via openclipart.org: https://openclipart.org/detail/219655/political-map-earth-globe-bomb
- Page divider - Mahua_Sarkar / CC0; via openclipart.org: https://openclipart.org/detail/282450/colourful-divider
- Golden call - the Providence Lithograph Company, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jeroboam%27s_idolstry.jpg
- Idol - Hathi Trust Digital Library, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hawaiian_idol.png
- Mask - netalloy / CC0; via openclipart.org: https://openclipart.org/detail/85135/mask
- Ugly face (cartoon) - Joe Mabel, CC BY-SA 3.0 <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>, via Wikimedia Commons: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Seattle_Ugly_Mug_02.jpg

Presentation - Dennis Hinks © 2024.

30