

Sermon Series: The Decalogue

**Sermon title:** "The 2nd Commandment"

**Scripture Reading:** Exodus 20:1-17

Clearwater Bay International Baptist Church

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**Introduction:**

There was once a king in Israel named Jehu.

You may not have heard of him.

You should know him, because he did great things.

He was the son of a king you may have heard of named Jehoshaphat.

Jehu was zealous for the LORD.

He executed the wicked queen Jezebel.

He slaughtered all of Ahab and Jezebel's descendants.

He killed all of the prophets of Baal and wiped out Baal worship from Israel.

So this Jehu was serious about making sure that no God was worshipped but the LORD.

But, he allowed golden calf worship.

Why did he do this?

I thought Jehu was zealous for the LORD?

Well, Jehu kept the first commandment but he broke the second commandment.

He cared about worshipping the right God but didn't care about worshipping God rightly.

**Let's pray.**

### **Exodus 20:4-6**

**4** "You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. **5** You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, **6** but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.

#### **I. What this commandment means.**

What we saw last week was that we were to worship the RIGHT God....the only God and not to worship anything else.

He's the only one and we should worship him alone.

Last week= Worship the right God.

This week= Worship God rightly.

The ESV translation is good here.

“You shall not make for yourself a carved image”

The Hebrew word here is 'pese!' and it means to carve.

God forbids that people carve or shape or weld or sculpt an image that represents God.

AND not make any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.

That covers everything.

Angels in heaven, people or animals on earth or fish or sea creatures.

Now an idol is nothing in and of itself.

An idol represents something else.

They are not the god themselves but as **Phil Ryken** says, idols are points of 'spiritual contact'.

God will have none of that.

We desire that we come to him straight.

We can't manipulate God.

**Walter Brueggemann** said, "God will not be captured, contained, assigned or managed by anyone or anything for any purpose."

So, this commandment means....Worship God rightly. Don't try to come to him through an image.

Can God be contained in a stone or wooden idol?

This will become more clear as we look at Biblical examples.

## **II. How Israel broke it.**

Well, the most famous story is the Golden Calf in

### **Exodus 32**

We need to read it.

**1** When the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people gathered themselves together to Aaron and said to him, "Up, make us gods who shall go before us. As for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him." **2** So Aaron said to them, "Take off the rings of gold that are in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me." **3** So all the people took off the rings of gold that were in their ears and brought them to Aaron. **4** And he received the gold from their hand and fashioned it with a graving tool and made a golden calf. And they said, "These are your gods, O Israel, **who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!**" **5** When Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it. And Aaron made a proclamation and said, "**Tomorrow shall be a feast to the LORD.**"

It's clear here that the golden calves are meant to represent the LORD.

The people seem to have wanted something they could see and touch. To hear God wasn't enough.

Fast forward to **1 Kings 12**.

Solomon has gone after other gods. He has broken the first commandment.

God gives 10 tribes to a servant of Solomon's named Jeroboam.

Jeroboam is afraid that the tribes will leave him and go back to the David's family...so he devises a plan to ensnare the people.

### **What does he do? 1 Kings 12:28**

So the king took counsel and made two calves of gold. And he said to the people, "You have gone up to Jerusalem long enough. Behold your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt."

**Verse 31** And appointed priests from among all the people who were not of the Levites.

I already told you in my illustration of Jehu, King of Israel also tolerated the golden calves as a symbolic image of the LORD.

## **You see what is going on here both with Aaron and with Jeroboam?**

They are worshipping the LORD wrongly.

They are breaking the second commandment by trying to make an image to connect with God.

Israel struggled with this a lot. Why?

Because all the nations around them had images and idols but the LORD said not to have any.

They must have felt like the odd balls.

Too strict.

### **III. How we might break it.**

Now, let's turn to ourselves for a bit.

Is there any way that we might break the Second Commandment?

#### **2 ways I see might be possible.**

1. Literally- Some in the world DO struggle with images and idols in their worship of the one true God. It may be a crucifix, Rosary or a statue of Mary or even Mary the mother of Jesus herself.....coming to God with Mary or a patron saint as your point of contact. That's breaking the Second Commandment.

2. Figuratively- ...in our hearts. I can give a personal **example** of something that I struggled with when I was younger.

I had the Lord work powerfully in my life at our church's church camp in the mountains. God, at one time in my life when I was really hurting....answered my prayer with a powerful sign. My dad was dying and I was doubting if the Lord really was hearing me. I was by the lake at night. The stars were out. I was alone. I said something like, "*Lord, if you are really hearing me and are going to take care of me, give me a sign.*" At that moment, a shooting star like a comet came streaking across the sky right in front of me with brilliance. It was amazing.

I have been tempted in my life to go back to that place to hear from God again. To see that kind of thing happen again in that place. That's dangerous.

**A place** doesn't need to be our point of spiritual contact with God. (See Jacob at Bethel)

What might be some other ways we might figuratively break the Second Commandment to NOT make an image to represent God?

Generally, when we don't listen to God's word as it is... and ignore parts we don't like or change it to our liking...we have made God into an image of our own imagination.

Worshipping God rightly requires that we not only avoid images of God but that we also avoid manipulating God into what we like.

There's a fine line between carving an image of God and carving God up to suit our tastes.

We should be careful not to use phrases like....  
*"I like to think of God as....."*

Other ways we might worship God with something else as our point of contact is.....

**-Elevating a Pastor to golden calf status.** If this Pastor says this, we believe it, follow it, etc. If a Pastor becomes your contact point to God, that's dangerous. Many of people have found themselves not knowing what to do with their faith when their favorite golden pastor failed.

**-Worship music.** Sometimes it seems like some are worshipping worship and not God. Ask yourself this question....

Can you worship God easily or do you have to have things a certain way to get that worship feeling?

#### **IV. Why it is important.**

**4** “You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. **5** You shall not bow down to them or serve them, **for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, 6 but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.**

God knows...as **John Calvin** said, “The human heart is a perpetual factory of idols.”

People don't carve up an image of God and stay there very long...they end up bowing down and serving false deities.

The Lord not only wants us to worship the right God  
But to worship HIM rightly.

Notice that there's a curse and a blessing in this command.

Notice what God is saying here is that if generations of families turn from HIM and worship idols that they will be cursed for their iniquity...that sounds harsh ...but notice that the children also...hate God.

BUT...literally, he shows.....**steadfast love to thousands of GENERATIONS to those who love me and keep my commandments.**

**We know the reality of this in that those who reject God and his Son Jesus Christ will be lost forever but those who receive Christ will experience his love forever.**

So, there's a high reward for worshipping the right God and worshipping him rightly and high cost for not worshipping him but turning to idols.

Now..maybe the deepest most profound reason why God doesn't want to make an image to worship him through....is that God has an image already.  
God already has a point of contact for us.  
He's a person. Jesus Christ.

**Colossians 1:15-** He is the image of the invisible God.

**2 Corinthians 4:4**- the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

Which is better? A stone idol or a real person?

Which is better? A wooden statue or a Holy Spirit living in you?

Jesus Christ is the one who we go to God through not an idol. He is THE point of contact between people and the one and only God.

Moreover, we Christians are also points of contact between people and God.

We are made in the image of God.

We are to reflect him to the world.

We aren't carved images of God but we are 'living stones', 'living sacrifices', 'light', 'salt', 'a city on a hill', 'A holy priesthood', 'a holy nation', 'a chosen race', 'God's people'...

proclaiming his excellencies in the world.