

The Ten Commandments

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**Have no other god before
Me**

The Ten Commandments

The Second Commandment

Topics:

The Idol of Self

Idols of Money, Technology, Addictions,
Absolute Political Systems, Addictions. . .

The Gods of Other Religions

Why Do We Worship Idols?

A Jealous God

How Can God Hold Responsible the Children of
Those Who Hate Him?

The Second Commandment

**You shall have no other gods before me
You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether
in the form of anything that is in heaven
above, or that is on the earth beneath, or
that is in the water under the earth.
You shall not bow down to them or worship
them,
for I the LORD your God am a jealous God,
punishing children for the iniquity of
parents, to the third and the fourth
generation of those who reject me,
but showing steadfast love to the thousandth
generation of those who love me and keep
my commandments**

Exodus 20: 3-6. NRSV

The Second Commandment

A “positive” phrasing of the second commandment:

“You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.”

Deuteronomy 6:5 (NRSV)

The Idol of Self

The Kotzker rabbi: The “I” is a thief

- it takes the partial and mistakes it for the whole.
- in our search for self-fulfillment, we tend to seek meaningful existence only of ourselves

examples:

- making our personal concerns more important than God’s
- making a religious service a “pick and choose feel-good activity” that turns our emotions into idols

The Idols of Money, Technology, Absolute Political Systems, Addictions

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we are called to *discipleship*, a totality of
commitment to

- God
- God's word
- God's vision and desire for us and for
others

we must be suspicious of *anything* that may
interfere with that commitment

The Idols of Money, Technology, Absolute Political Systems, Addictions

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for example, wealth:

No one can serve two masters, for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth (Matthew 6:24, NRSV)

also:

Ezekiel 7:19-20

Deuteronomy 32:10-18

The Gods of Other Religions

true or false?

- all religious non-Christians are idolaters
- all non-orthodox Christians are heretics

Questions:

Do only Christians worship the one true living God?

What should our attitude be towards other religions?

Can salvation be found outside the church?

Why Do We Worship Idols?

1. The Religious Instinct in Humanity
2. The Desire to Manipulate God
3. A Need for a Visible God
4. A Confused Sense of Freedom

(from Timmerman)

Why Do We Worship Idols?

1. The Religious “Instinct” in Humanity

the suggestion we have an innate sense of the divine, a inner longing for transcendence

- Platonism: “intellectual vision” of ultimate good, justice, love. . . part of the Divine Mind
- Schleiermacher: “God consciousness,” our feeling of utter dependency

can be perverted, misdirected

Why Do We Worship Idols?

2. The Desire to Manipulate God

our tendency to envision, project onto

- God,

or

- a substitute “god”

those characteristics that satisfy our own psychological needs (thus “manipulating” God)

Why Do We Worship Idols?

3. A Need for a Visible God

a desire to:

“capture” God in a concrete, visible, static form (*denying the relatedness of God*),

worship a God who is fully knowable, who is without mystery (*denying the transcendence of God*)

worship a God fashioned by our own hands (*forming God in our own image*)

worship the here and now (*an ego centered universe*)

Why Do We Worship Idols?

4. A Confused Sense of Freedom

freedom is not being bound by the conventions of others, but choosing your own way (?)

idolatry, choosing what to “worship,” is a path to freedom

Why Do We Worship Idols?

4. A Confused Sense of Freedom

What is freedom?

The metaphor of the train journey. If a train wants to go to Chicago, is it bondage or freedom for it to stay on the track to Chicago?

Where does Grace come in?

Why Do We Worship Idols?

4. A Confused Sense of Freedom

Grace and Freedom. Two paradigms:

1. *Augustine*. We are naturally inclined to the divine, but our natures have become corrupted. Grace *restores* us to our natural state.
2. *Aquinas*. We are naturally inclined to the world. Grace *raises* us up so we can aspire to and achieve that which we would otherwise be incapable of in our natural state

A Jealous God

**“(for you shall worship no other god,
because the LORD, whose name is
Jealous, is a jealous God)”**

Exodus 34: 14 (NRSV)

**“They made me jealous with what is
no god, provoked me with their
idols.”**

Deuteronomy 32:21 (NRSV)

metaphor is from marriage, stressing

allegiance to YHWH alone

YHWH demands absolute loyalty and

rejection of all other Gods

A Jealous God

there are no other real gods, so why should
God be jealous of that which is not real?

Rabbi Gamliel's answer: parable of the man
who takes a second wife inferior to the
first.

- First wife will be rightly infuriated that
her husband is lessening his devotion
to her for a woman who is less worthy

How Can God Hold Responsible the Children of Those Who Hate Him?

“ . . .for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and the fourth generation of those who reject me. . . ”

Exodus 20:5 (NRSV)

“Parents shall not be put to death for their children, nor shall children be put to death for their parents, only for their own crimes may persons be put to death.”

Deuteronomy 24:16 (NRSV)

How Can God Hold Responsible the Children of Those Who Hate Him?

Possible Answers:

1. offspring punished only if children:
 - follow the sinful ways of their parents
 - fail to protest if it is within their power
2. God's remembrance of the parent's sins is God taking notice that a parent's actions, genetic predisposition shape a child's behavior

How Can God Hold Responsible the Children of Those Who Hate Him?

Possible Answers:

3. a reminder that children do suffer from the iniquities of their parents: neglect; inheritance of a polluted world
4. statement is harsh, but God later changes his mind after the Golden Calf incident, removing the conditions on his steadfast love (Exodus 34:6-7)

References

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- Exodus. (Interpretation. A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching.)** Terence E. Fretheim, John Knox Press, Louisville, 1991