

THOU SHALT NOT MAKE ANY GRAVEN IMAGE

Introduction:

1. Throughout this study, it must be emphasized that man today is not under the Law of Moses – including the Ten Commandments.
2. However, the things that “were written aforetime were written for our learning” (Rom. 15:4).
3. THOU SHALT HAVE NO OTHER GODS BEFORE ME

I. The Specifics of the Command

- A. “Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image.”
 1. The word ‘graven’ means to be carved or engraved.
 2. Idols were made from wood, stone, or metal.
 3. They were carved, molded, or shaped to look like images of other things.
 4. Yet, this passage does not condemn the making of all images.
 - a. There were images of angels on the Ark of the Covenant (Exo. 25:18-20).
 - b. Moses made a brass serpent (Num. 21:8-9).
 - c. Today, men make sculptures and statues as art and to honor important men and events.
 5. What is condemned is the making of images to be worshipped (Exo. 32:1, 8, 23; 34:17; Lev. 26:1; Deut. 27:15; etc.).
- B. “In heaven, the earth, or the water”
 1. “God is a spirit” (John 4:24).
 2. Therefore, no material thing – however grand – can represent God.
 3. To create a graven image is to place limits upon the limitless God.
 4. Thus, one’s perception, conception, and understanding of God becomes twisted and inaccurate.
- C. “Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them.”
 1. It is foolish to treat an image as if it were a god (Psa. 97:7; 115:4-8; Isa. 40:18ff; 44:9-20; 46:5-8; Jer. 10:3-5; Acts 17:29; etc.).
 2. It is demonic to worship idols (Lev. 17:7; Deut. 32:17; 2 Chron. 11:15; Psa. 106:37; 1 Cor. 10:20).
 3. It is sinful to worship idols.

II. The Principles of the Command

- A. God is a jealous God.
 1. This is not the human emotion of jealousy.
 2. This is not a frailty based on pride or selfishness.
 3. Rather, it is a just response to the fact that there is no other who is worthy of the honor that belongs to God (cf. Isa. 42:8; 48:11).
- B. Iniquity is visited unto the fourth generation of those who hate God.
 1. Skeptics like to twist this passage to teach a cruel, unjust, and vindictive God.

2. However, it does not teach that God punishes children for the sins of their parents or ancestors (cf. Deut. 24:16; Eze. 18:20; etc.).
 3. It means that the consequences of sin can continue for generations.
 4. If parents have an incorrect view of God, that same view will likely be passed on for generations.
 5. If parents worship idols, it is likely that their children will also.
 6. And, if they do, they will reap the consequences of their sin.
 7. Note the implication that idolatry comes out of a hatred of God!
- C. Mercy is extended to thousands who love God.
1. Those who misconstrue the previous statement usually overlook this one.
 2. While iniquity may continue to the 3rd and 4th generation, God's mercy continues to the thousandth generation!
 3. This is not inherited righteousness or salvation.
 4. But, God makes it available to all men.

III. The Application of the Command

- A. Those who worship images as divine
 1. Buddhists, Hindus, etc.
 2. Catholic iconography
 3. Lucky charms, etc.
- B. Those who worship nature as divine
 1. Astrology
 2. Darwinism
 3. "I can get closer to God in nature than in some church building."
- C. Those who worship man as divine
 1. Prayer to saints, etc. (cf. Acts 10:25-26; 14:11ff; Rev. 19:10)
 2. Follow men instead of the Bible
- D. Those who worship self as divine
 1. Humanism
 2. Moral relativism (cf. Romans 1:22-32)
- E. Those who worship ritual as divine
 1. The brass serpent (Num. 21:6ff; 2 Kings 18:4)
 2. The Ark of the Covenant (1 Sam. 4:3)
 3. The Lord's Supper, etc.