First Century Fellowship Ministry

A Biblical Church of God

The Second Commandment

(Exodus 20: 4-6; Deuteronomy 5: 8-10)

Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.

Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the inequity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me; and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love Me and keep My commandments.

In the First Commandment we learned that God is our Creator God. The source of all that is. Truth, morals, the values we are to have and all that will lead us to a right relationship with Him. It tells us what we worship. We are to worship Him and Him alone and do so, "...in spirit and in truth." (John 4:23-24). This way of worship is the basis of the second commandment. We are not allowed by God to use any type of idol or aide in worshipping Him. The second commandment shows the way we worship Him.

Before God descended on Mt Sinai to give His law to the children of Israel (all 12 tribes) He called Moses up to the mountain and gave him specific instructions for the people. Exodus 19:1-25 tells us that God told Moses to sanctify the people have them wash their clothes. He went on to tell Moses to set bounds so that no one could go up to or touch the mountain and to have them ready on the third day at the sound of the trumpet to approach the mountain. On the third day the trumpet

sounded and all gathered as instructed. God spoke His law directly to the children of Israel.

After the speaking of the law to them, "Then the Lord said to Moses, 'Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'You yourselves have seen that I have spoken to you from heaven. You shall not make other gods besides Me; gods of silver or gods of gold, you shall not make for yourselves.'" (Exodus 20:22-23).

Later, in Deuteronomy 4, God explains His law to Moses who reduced it to writing for all the people so it may be known to them and they would teach their children.

"10. Remember the day you stood before the Lord your God at Horeb, when the Lord said to me, 'Assemble the people to Me, that I may let them hear My words so they may learn to fear Me all the days they live on the earth, and that they may teach their children.'… 12. Then the Lord spoke to you from the midst of the fire; you heard the sound of words, but you saw no form-only a voice. … 15. So watch yourselves carefully, since you did not see any form on the day the Lord spoke to you at Horeb from the midst of the fire, 16. So that you do not act corruptly and make a graven image for yourselves in the form of any figure, the likeness of male or female, … 19. And beware not to lift up your eyes to heaven and see the sun and the moon and the stars, all the host of heaven, and be drawn away and worship them and serve them, those which the Lord your God has allotted to all the peoples under the whole heaven. 20. But the Lord has taken you and brought you out of the iron furnace, from Egypt, to be a people for His own possession, as today." (Deuteronomy 4: 10, 12, 15, 16, 19, 20).

What has God just instructed? What are His words to them and to us? He wants us to worship Him, the living God, not an image or an idol that we may use to represent Him. As we learned in our study of the first commandment, He wants us to worship Him as the living Creator God NOT any created objects. Deuteronomy 4:23-24 goes on to state, "So watch yourselves, that you do not forget the covenant of the Lord your God which He made with you, and make for yourselves a graven image in the form

of anything against which the Lord your God has commanded you. For the Lord your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God."

We may say, "I just use my crucifix as a reminder. I don't worship it." Or, "It just helps me focus on God when I pray to Him." By doing this we have reduced the Creator God to an image. Think about this, do you think any image or created object could represent all the dynamic facets of the Creator God? Where do these images come from? The mind of man, his natural physical mind. Man is a visual creature. We need to see something to fully understand it. We want a created idol or object or aide to help us in our worship of the Creator God. The problem is twofold. As we saw above, it is expressly forbidden by the Creator God. He does not want us to worship Him in this way. Additionally, if man creates an object to help him worship, how can that object be any greater than man? It cannot. So by creating an object we, man, limit the magnificence of God with our creation. We cannot portray the fullness of the Creator God with any object. We try to limit the invisible Creator God to an image we physical creatures can understand. God wants us to worship and be devoted to Him and not what we think He is or what He looks like.

When we worship or bow to a created object we are actually worshipping *our* image of God. We may feel we are praying or worshipping with a great deal of devotion to the Creator God but we have placed our created object between us and God. God wants us to worship Him in spirit and in truth, "23. But an hour is coming, and now is, when the **true** worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for such people the Father seeks to be His worshippers. 24. God is spirit, and those who worship Him **must** worship in spirit and truth." (John 4:23, 24). Notice, **true** worshippers **must** worship Him in spirit and in truth. If we worship God in a way He does not approve of or contrary to how He has told us to worship Him we are doing so on an image, precept or teaching of man, and this is worshipping in vain. "But in vain do they worship Me, teaching for doctrine the precepts of men." Matthew 15:9;

Mark 7:7-8). He has directed us, and we show our love and devotion to Him by keeping His commandments. "If you love me, you will keep My commandments." (John 14:15, 21; 15:10). True followers of God do not need an image, "likeness" or idol to help them worship.

If you follow the custom and traditions of a church, your family or your peers rather than the commands of God you are an idolator. Whatever it is becomes the idol you place before the true God.

When we pursue this idolatrous behavior scripture, the word of God, tells us what we can expect. "... for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the inequity of the fathers on the children, on the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me," Exodus 20:5; Deuteronomy 5:9). If we follow God's instructions and worship Him as He requires we can expect His mercy. "And showing mercy and steadfast love to a thousand generations of those who love Me and keep My commandments." (Exodus 20:6; Deuteronomy 5:10, AMP). He "visits" inequity on the third and fourth generations for not following His guidance, but shows "mercy and steadfast love to a thousand generations", if we obey Him and His commandments. He is showing us how much He loves us. "... and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation; "(2 Peter 3: 15). Can an inanimate creation of man do that? They have no life in them and cannot bestow anything on us. They are simply a creation of man, an idol, a poor replacement for the living God.

Growing in knowledge and understanding of the truth of God is essential for us to develop a holy and righteous character. We are required to learn and grow. "but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen." (2 Peter 3:18). As we grow in knowledge and understanding our level of responsibility also grows. We must apply what we have learned, this revealed knowledge of God, in our everyday lives. "But prove yourself doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. For if

anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does." (James 1:22-25; also see Romans 2:13).

We can see how seriously God feels about not keeping His commandments and in how we worship Him. "When you come to appear before Me, Who requires of you this trampling of My courts? Bring your worthless offerings no longer, incense is an abomination to Me. New moon and Sabbath, the calling of assemblies-I cannot endure inequity and the solemn assembly. I hate your new moon festivals and your appointed feasts. They have become a burden to Me; I am weary of bearing them. So when you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide My eyes from you; yes, even though you multiply prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are covered with blood." (Isaiah 1:12-15). The statement, "your new moon festivals and your appointed feasts," indicate they were not keeping His, Gods, appointed days but their own. This is idolatry and we can see God was not pleased. He rejected their worship of Him after they had profaned His feasts, Sabbaths and assemblies. The modern equivalent of this is His saints keeping Christmas and Easter. Will He still hear us if we profane His majesty by honoring pagan festivals. I think not. Paul wrote, "For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolator, has an inheritance in the kingdom of God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not be partakers with them;" (Ephesians 5:5-7). Our Creator God deserves our worship and devotion as He requires not how we think it would be pleasing to Him. We need to eliminate the "worship of self" and concentrate on worshipping our Lord God as He directs us.

Proverbs identifies the problem. "Every man's way is right in his own eyes, But the Lord weighs the heart." (Proverbs 21:2). "There is a way which seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death." (Proverbs 16:25).

Isaiah gives us a solution. "Let the wicked forsake his way, And the unrighteous man his thoughts; Let him return to the Lord, And He will have compassion on him, And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon." (Isaiah 55:7).

The Second Commandment shows us the way we must worship our Creator God. It also shows us that God is by far, greater than anything we could create or imagine. We must worship Him in spirit and in truth and only as He commands us. We must live our life in a holy and righteous manner to honor God.

"Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man." (Ecclesiastes 12:13).