

TEN COMMANDMENTS SERIES: COMMANDMENT TWO

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INTRODUCTION

1. In the mid-1940's, America was learning how to embrace post war life.
 - a. Women, who had been a critical part of sustaining supplies at home, were expected to return back to the home and make the most of their existence.
 - b. The year after the end of World War 2, a man named Earl Tupper created a product and a concept to help women in their transition.
 - 1) Yes, Earl Tupper was the inventor of Tupperware
 - 2) Plastic containers for storing their food
 - 3) And the Tupperware Party was a means by which post-war women were no longer contained by the limitations of domestication.
2. In time between then, our fellow Americans have slightly evolved.
 - a. Still, we have maintained this love of containers.
 - b. It's delightful to be able to store the things we want to keep in place.
 - c. In fact there's even an entire store devoted to containers (The container store).
3. Today we take a look at the second commandment within the Decalogue.
 - a. The commandment dealing with idolatry.
 - b. What I hope we discover is the ways in which we try to contain God.

I. TEXT

Exodus 20:4-6 *"You shall not make for yourself an idol 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 fathers 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.*

A. THE HISTORY OF IDOLATRY

1. Understand this is not the first mention of idolatry in the Torah (beginning biblical books).
 - a. The first mention is made concerning a woman who would help birth the nation of Israel.
 - b. Rachel was the wife of Jacob (son of Isaac, son of Abraham).
 - c. When she was getting ready to flee from her father, we read in **Genesis 31:19**
"When Laban had gone to shear his sheep, Rachel stole her father's household gods."

B. CLARIFYING THE COMMANDMENT

1. As we explore this commandment, it seems kind of repetitive to the first commandment.
 - a. It seems like a restatement of the first command to have no other gods before him.
 - b. In reality, this commandment doesn't have anything to do with worshipping other gods.
 - 1) Note the text does not reference other gods
 - 2) It prohibits worshipping man-made images: in heaven above/earth/waters below.
 - 3) The focus here: crafting images meant to represent the Lord God Almighty himself.
2. The significance of this text is that this commandment was countercultural.
 - a. Idols were deified in ceremony and the used as go-betweens with their gods.
 - b. This is a pre-provision: God doesn't need an intermediary relationship with his people
 - c. The God of Israel will not be localized. **HE ISN'T LIKE OTHER GODS.**
 - d. For an example of this, let's look historically . . .
3. The Enuma Elish is an ancient Babylonian creation myth
 - a. It dates between 1600 and 1800 years before the birth of Christ.
 - b. Some skeptics of Christianity believe just it's one explanation of how the world works.
 - c. In the proclamation of the superiority of the god Marduk (the head of the Babylonian

pantheon), we read the physical description of this deity.

"His limbs were ingeniously made beyond comprehension, impossible to understand, too difficult to perceive. Four were his eyes, four were his ears; when his lips moved, fire blazed forth. The four ears were enormous and likewise the eyes; they perceived everything. Highest among the gods, his form was outstanding. His limbs were very long; his height was outstanding."

4. While this anthropomorphizing could be powerful, it's comes off silly?
 - a. He's less of a god and more of a freak.
 - b. Our god will not allow his existence to be framed in such a way.

C. THE POWER OF THE IDOL

1. Also, we need to understand the power of idol (not American Idol, but real idols).
 - a. What is an idol? An image/representation of what something is.
 - b. The issue is not necessarily that we will think the idol is a god.
 - *As we said before, it wasn't that the pagans thought idols WERE gods.
 - c. THE ISSUE IS THAT WE BEGIN TO THINK THAT THIS IS WHAT GOD ACTUALLY LOOKS LIKE.
2. The power of the idol is directly related to the power of image.
 - a. When we make an image, what are we doing? We're CAPTURING IT.
 - b. Yes, we're containing it, and so we're manipulating it in our minds.
 - 1) Even subconsciously, we're selling ourselves on the image.
 - 2) EXAMPLE: pictures of Fast Food (not as nice in reality)
 - 3) We're not dealing with reality, but with the vision the isn't real.
3. WHAT'S HAPPENING?
 - a. The Lord is establishing the basis by which his people would worship him.
 - b. We are not to imagine the Lord according to our own choosing.
 - c. In short, WE DO NOT DETERMINE HOW WE WORSHIP GOD. HE DOES.

D. THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE COMMANDMENT

1. This commandment has some weightiness to it.
 - a. Note the jealousy of God here. It's the only commandment with a threat.
 - b. The third and fourth generation punishment sounds harsh.
 - 1) The implication: It's not that God punishes generations, but households.
 - 2) Multiple generations could have dwelled in the same household.
2. But it's also a commandment with huge benefit.
 - a. Do you want a legacy that will transcend your life? OBEY THE LORD.
 - b. Keep his commands, and your kids' kids' kids' kids' kids' kids' will be blessed.

E. WHY IS IDOLATRY WRONG?

1. Because of what it does to our relationship with God.
 - a. Idolatry inverts the relationship between us and God.
 - b. See **Genesis 1:27** "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them."
 - c. He is the creator. When we make idols, we try to make him.
2. But allow me to return to my primary contention: It's wrong b/c you cannot contain God.
 - a. Idolatry limits the **INFINITE GREATNESS** of God
 - b. Understand ourselves in relationship to the scope of the universe.
 - *Human | Sears Tower | Mercury | Earth | Our sun | Beetleguise | Nebula | Galaxies (Milky Way) | Observable universe | Actual Universe
 - c. Perhaps something you haven't thought of: Idolatry limits God's **INFINITE SMALLNESS**
 - *Earthworm | Hummingbird Egg | Piece of Paper | Red blood cell | CD Pit Depth | DNA | XRay Wavelength | Nubcleus | Proton | Quarkextremes of Measureable depth

3. Idolatry attempts to contain God either in a place too small or too large.

CONCLUSION

1. It's enough not to practice idolatry.

a. What we really should do is reclaim idols for the One True God.

b. A story from the New Testament: **Acts 17:22,23**

"Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: 'Men of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. Now what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you.'"

c. Even today, we try to contain God. When we do, we ultimately fail.

*DO NOT CONTAIN GOD. LET HIM BE HIM.