



DIGGING DEEPER

Exodus 20:4-7 – True worship of the true God

PLEASE READ – Exodus 20:1-7

GETTING STARTED

What do you think count as “idols” nowadays? What do you make of a phrase such as “a pop idol” (or maybe “football star”)? Might this Second Commandment also refer to ideologies – ways of looking at the world – or just *ideas* that we buy into?

“Misusing” (or “taking in vain”) the Name: what does this include? And are we supposed to challenge other people (unbelievers!) if we think they do this? Is that “standing up for God’s honour”?

The second commandment (verses 4-6)

God’s people are prohibited from worshipping their own perceptions or inventions of him.

- *What precisely is prohibited here, and why?*

What’s so wrong with the use of a picture or statue representing some aspect of God, if someone claims it helps them to worship?

Apart from God’s self-revelation in Scripture, how well can we work out what he is like?
See Job 11:7-8 and Romans 1:19-23 – but notice how easily idolatry comes!

Would you say that *any* image we might try to make of God (or perhaps even more, of Jesus) will always *mislead* more than it helps? Think of any such picture you’ve ever seen; how complete a picture does it give? What is missed out, as well as what is portrayed?

But don’t we have all the *image* of God that we could need?
See Colossians 1:15 and Hebrews 1:3

- *How can God be “jealous”?*

Jealousy has such a negative press, but what *positive* function is it *meant* to have?
When might it be appropriate? But what dangers accompany it?

If the Israelites are God’s own special people (Exodus 19:4-6) – think of this *covenant*, in some ways, being like our *covenant* of marriage – isn’t jealousy on his part appropriate to maintain the integrity of the relationship? Consider 1 Corinthians 10:21-22

Would it be truly loving of God *not* to be jealous – and concerned for the well-being of his special people?

- *Why do the ripples spread?* – see verses 5 and 6

Be honest: do you rather shrink back from this “punishing the children” stuff?

But set that in the context of ...

- i) this relates to people “who *hate* me”
- ii) there are just consequences to certain actions – like driving the wrong way on a motorway. Does that apply in this case?
- iii) the contrasting abundant grace to *thousands*

Does that help at all?

- *What sort of things must I watch out for*, as regards keeping this commandment?

The third commandment (verse 7)

In every aspect of our lives, we are to consider and live for the honour of the one true God.

Surely this has to apply to far more than just our trying to police the speech of unbelievers?

- “the Name”: Consider ...

Any time we hear of “the name of the Lord” in a verse or passage, we can substitute “the character of the Lord” in its place. God’s name represents the sum total of his character. He is holy, loving, just, compassionate, omnipresent, omnipotent, sovereign, gracious, merciful, patient, infinite, and good. To pray “in the name of the Lord” is to pray according to his character. To call upon the name of the Lord is to ask God to act according to his character. To take shelter in the name of the Lord is to place our trust in who he is. To be baptised in the name of the Lord is to identify with his character as our salvation, our strength, and our new identity.

- “misuse”: that’s a fair application of the two Hebrews words used together here, but it’s also helpful to consider the two words separately – the more traditional wording, actually
- “take”: a word that can mean simply “carry” or “lift up”
- “in vain”: “empty” or “deceitful”

If *everything we do* as a believer in Jesus Christ will be seen to reflect on his “name” (see Colossians 3:17), is this third commandment far more wide-ranging than we typically think?

In which case ... *how* does it apply to us, in practice?