

The Second Commandment

Duties Toward God · The Ten Commandments

The second commandment prohibits idolatry—making or worshiping any representation of God or false deity. While the first commandment addresses whom we worship, the second addresses how we worship. God cannot be reduced to any created form; all images inevitably diminish and distort His infinite being. This commandment protects both God's honor and humanity's good, for idolatry degrades the worshiper. God describes Himself as 'jealous'—not with petty envy but with the righteous zeal of a husband protecting the marriage covenant.

Key Verses

Exodus 20:4-6

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 iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.

Deuteronomy 4:15-16

Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves; for ye saw no manner of similitude on the day that the LORD spake unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire: Lest ye corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image, the similitude of any figure.

Romans 1:22-23

Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.

