

Torah Studies

The Second Commandment Exodus 20:4-6

Exodus: *Shemot* or Names



Rabbis Studying Scripture – Konstanty Szewczenko

The Second Commandment

Exodus 20:4-6

Introduction

The Second Commandment

Exodus 20:4-6

Introduction

Previously in Exodus:

The Second Commandment

Exodus 20:4-6

Introduction

Previously in Exodus:

- A few weeks back we did a quick overview of all ten of the Ten Commandments.
- Then we took a closer look at the first of the ten.

The Second Commandment

Exodus 20:4-6

Introduction

What to expect in Exodus 20:4-6:

The Second Commandment

Exodus 20:4-6

Introduction

What to expect in Exodus 20:4-6:

- Today we will see the next installment in a series looking at the Ten Commandments one at a time.
- The Second Commandment is the prohibition on using idols in worship.
- We might think of it as a partner commandment to the first.

Torah Studies

Taking Refuge in God's Word

Torah Studies

Taking Refuge in God's Word

- Psalm 119:141-144 (NKJV)

141 I am small and despised,

Yet I do not forget Your precepts.

142 Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness,
And Your law is truth.

Torah Studies

Taking Refuge in God's Word

- Psalm 119:141-144 (NKJV)

143 Trouble and anguish have overtaken me,
Yet Your commandments are my delights.

144 The righteousness of Your testimonies is
everlasting;

Give me understanding, and I shall live.

The Second Commandment

Exodus 20:4-6

The Text

The Second Commandment

Exodus 20:4-6

The Text

4 You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth ...



The Second Commandment

Exodus 20:4-6

The Text

... 5 You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me ...



The Second Commandment

Exodus 20:4-6

The Text

... 6 but showing steadfast love to thousands [or “*a thousand generations*”] of those who love me and keep my commandments.



The Second Commandment

Exodus 20:4-6

Outline

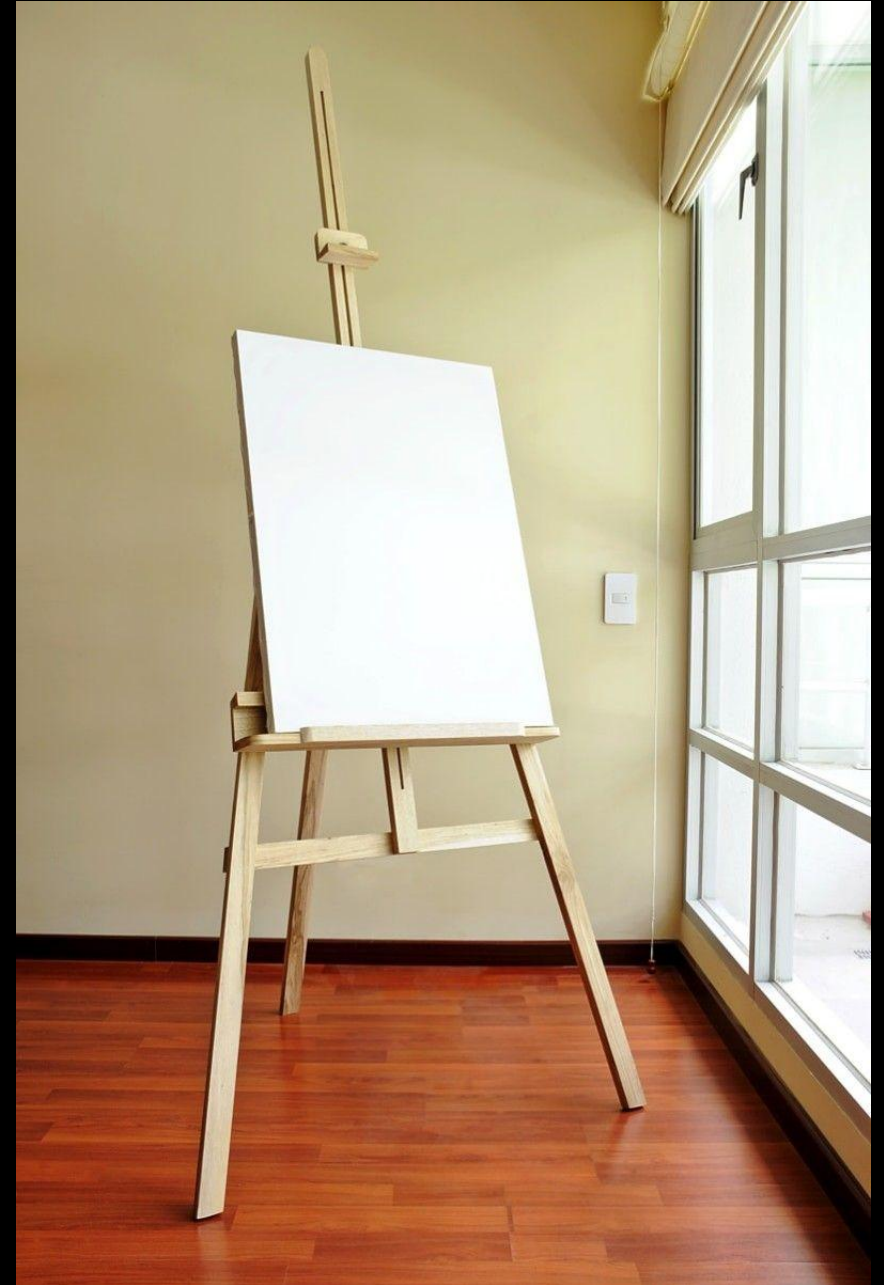
The Second Commandment

Exodus 20:4-6

Outline

- I. Idolatry is Forbidden
- II. Idolatry Distorts Worship
- III. God's Jealous Love

I. Idolatry is Forbidden



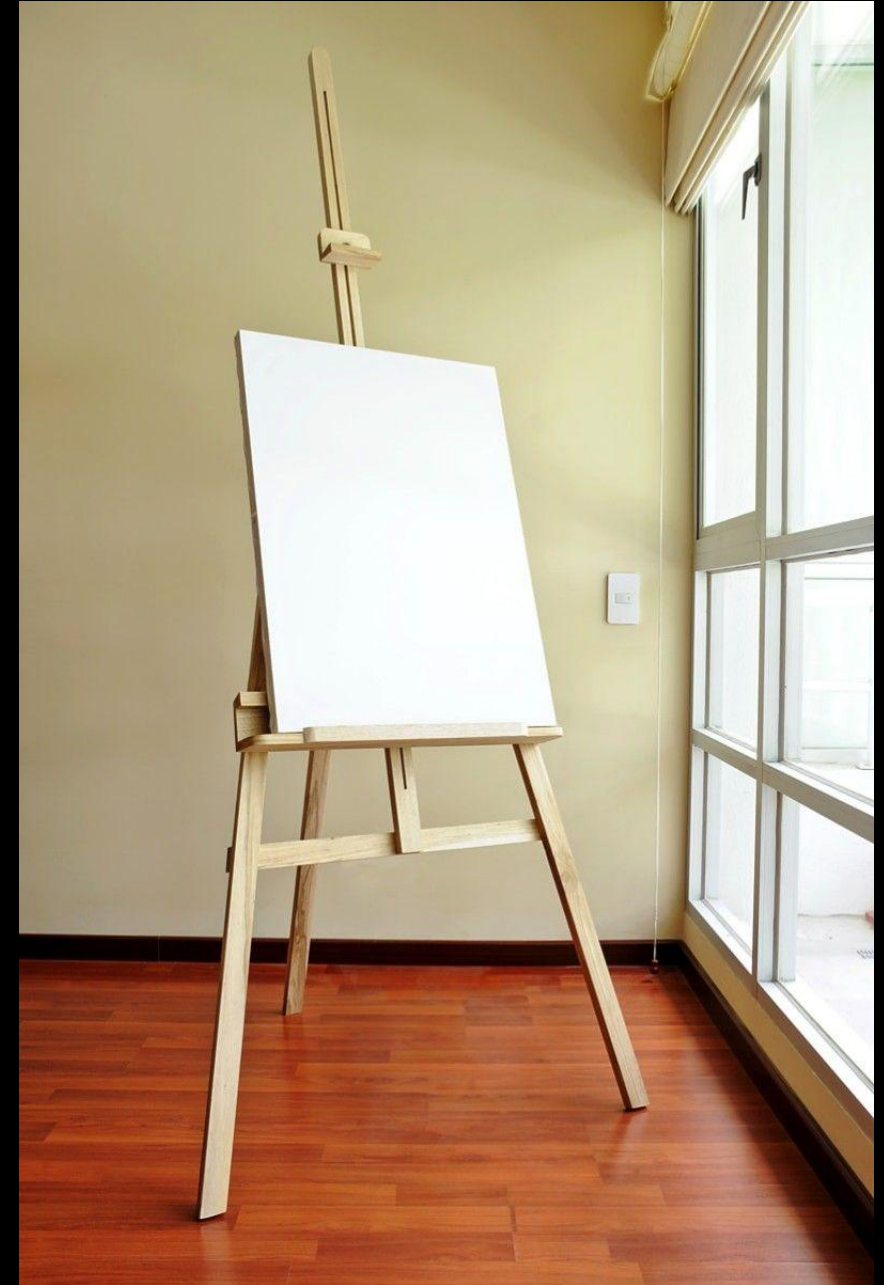
I. Idolatry is Forbidden

- God forbids the use of any kind of image in worship.
- Notice how thorough the wording is in v.4.



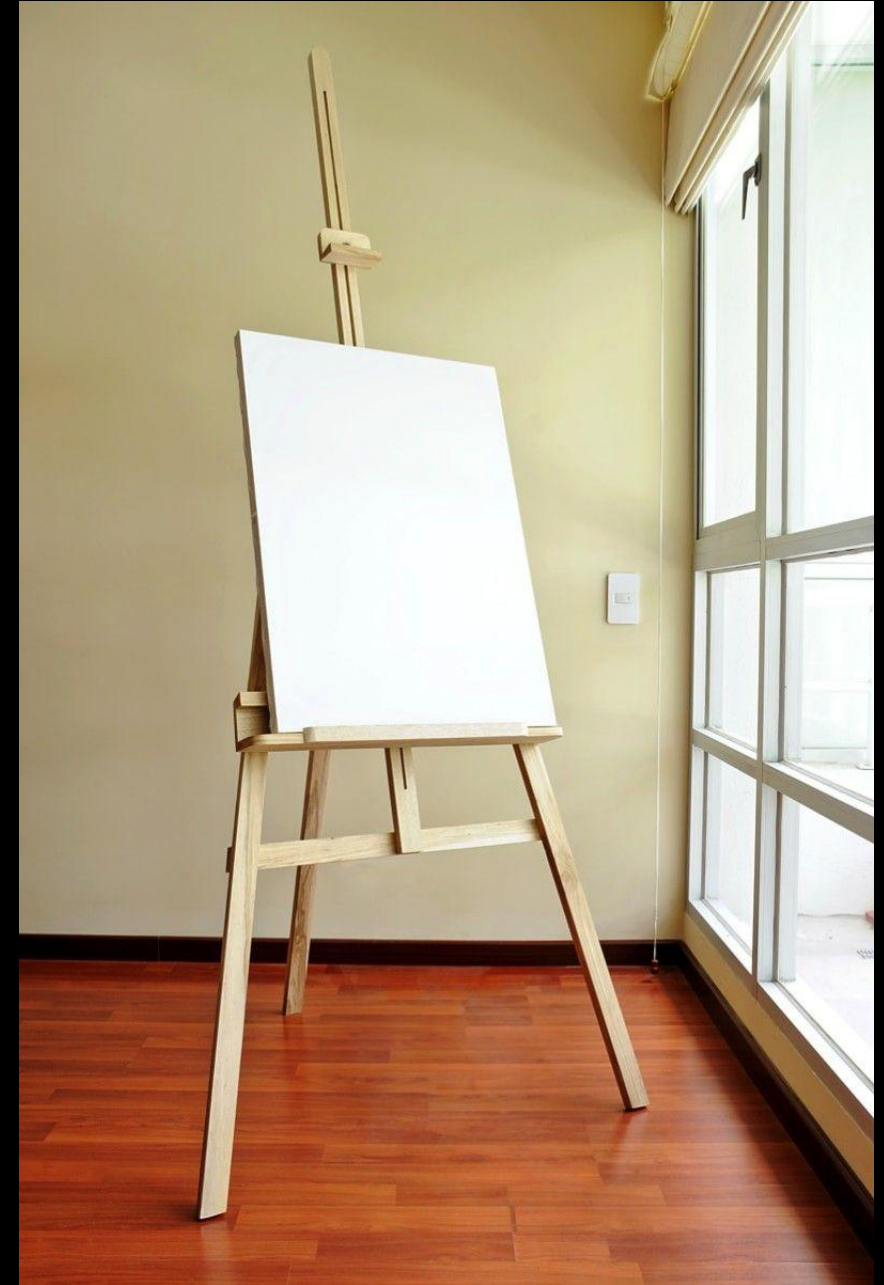
I. Idolatry is Forbidden

- I have sometimes heard that the image is not really worshiped.
- The image is only a symbol.



I. Idolatry is Forbidden

- I have sometimes heard that the image is not really worshiped.
- The image is only a symbol.
- Maybe, but look at **v.5**.
- Bowing down to the idol is forbidden.



I. Idolatry is Forbidden

- We don't bow in reverence to something that is a *mere* symbol.
- We bow down to, we revere, something that we believe is greater than us.
- God does not want to be symbolized or worshiped in that way.



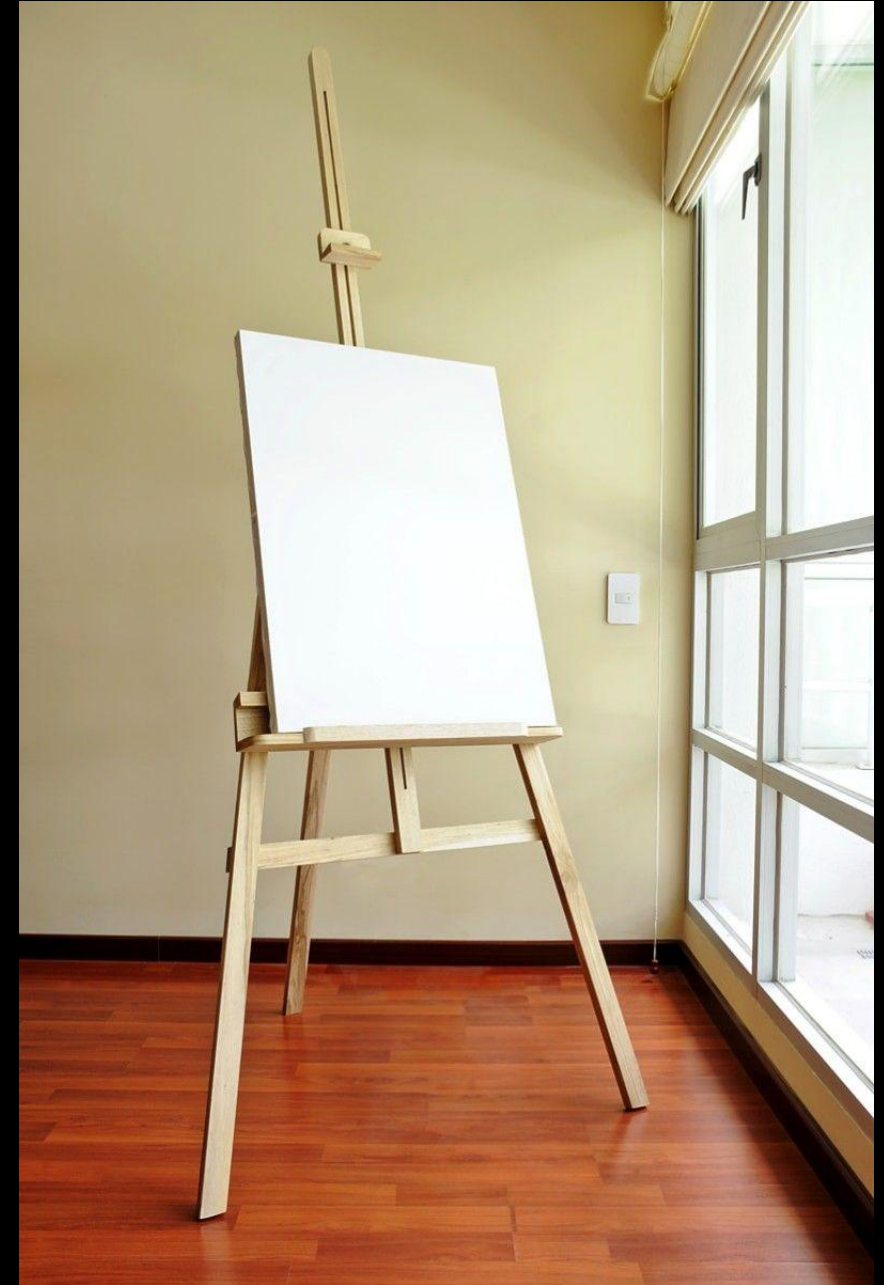
I. Idolatry is Forbidden

- Later in Exodus, Aaron will make a golden calf.
- In **Exodus 32:4**, he says,
“... These are you gods, O Israel,
who brought you out of the land of
Egypt!”



I. Idolatry is Forbidden

- Turn to 1 Kings 12:25-30.



I. Idolatry is Forbidden

- Jeroboam broke away from the southern Kingdom of Judah.
- He founded the northern Kingdom of Israel.
- And he immediately set up idols.



I. Idolatry is Forbidden

- Like Aaron, he imagined this was an acceptable way to worship the gods “who brought Israel up out of the land of Egypt.”



I. Idolatry is Forbidden

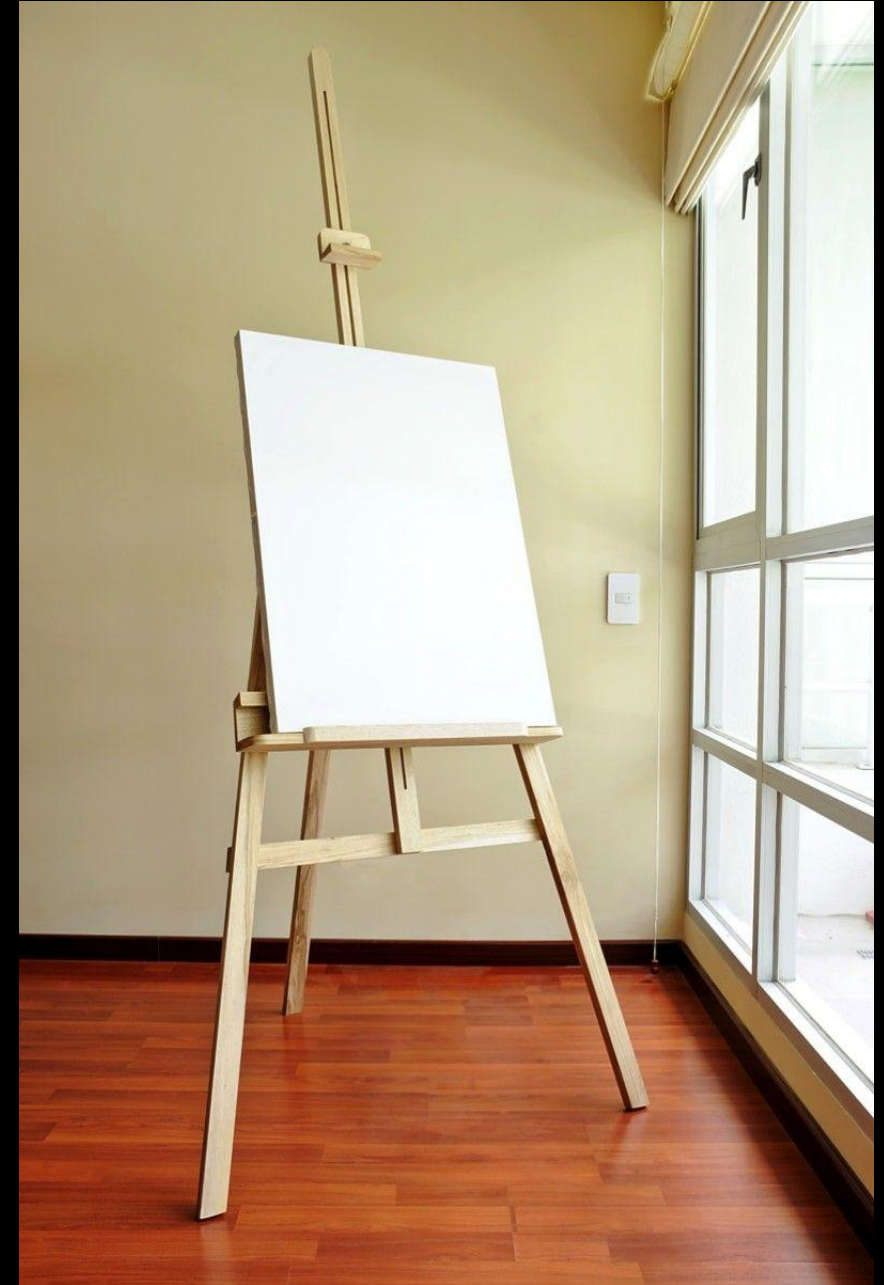
- From God's perspective Jeroboam was leading the people into sin.
- His name was used as an example of evil for further generations.



I. Idolatry is Forbidden

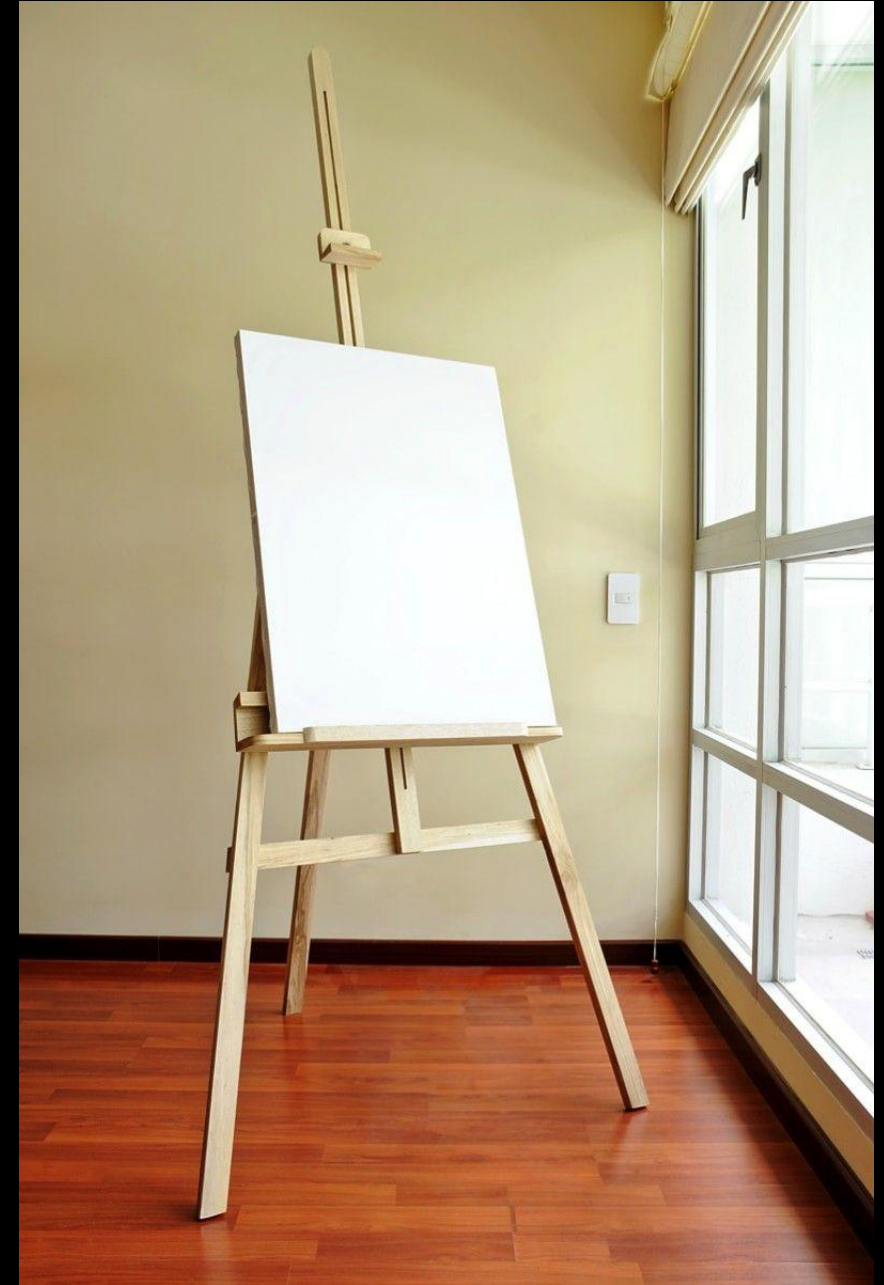
- 1 Kings 15:33-34

33 In the third year of Asa king of Judah, Baasha the son of Ahijah began to reign over all Israel at Tirzah, and he reigned twenty-four years. 34 He did what was evil in the sight of the Lord and walked in the way of Jeroboam and in his sin which he made Israel to sin.

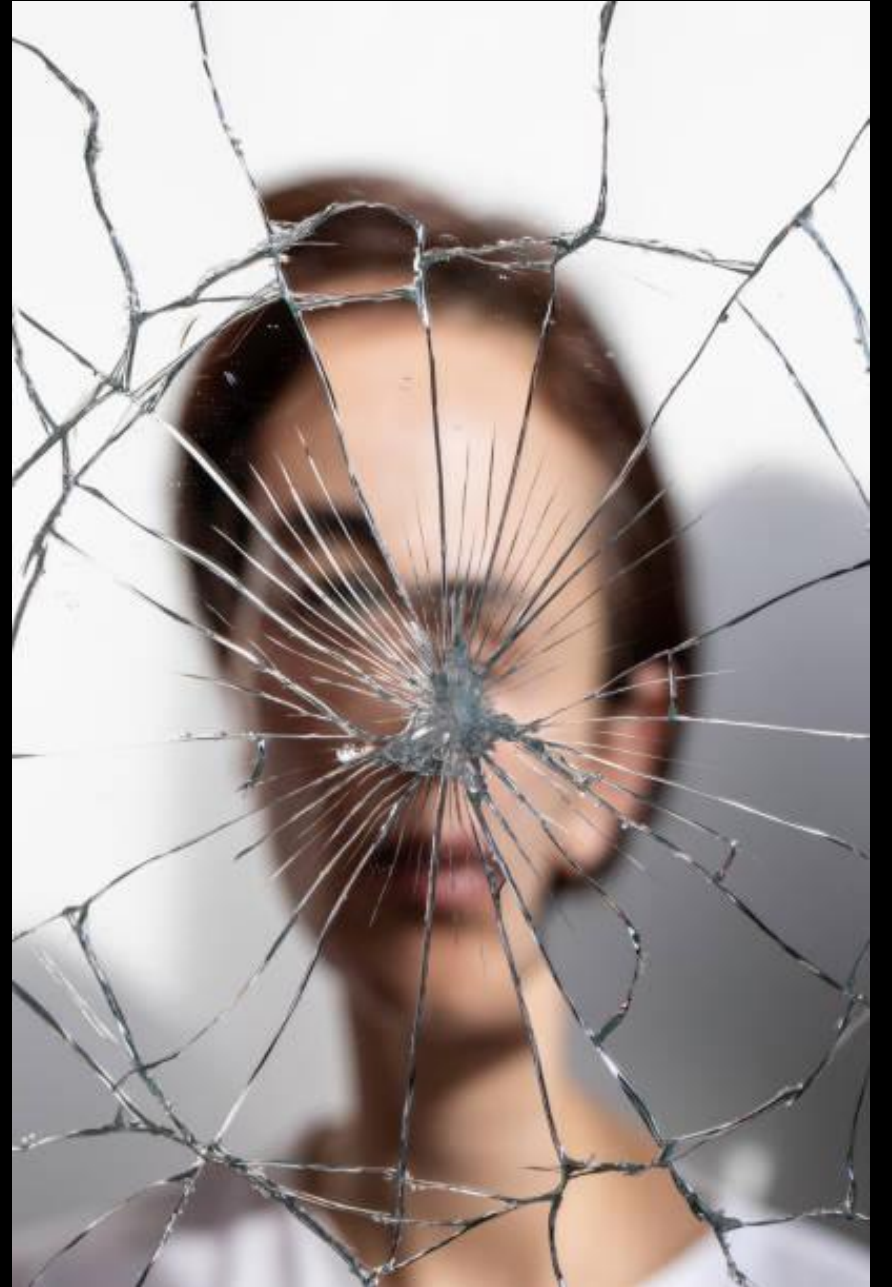


I. Idolatry is Forbidden

- What's so bad about idolatry anyway?



II. Idolatry Distorts Worship



II. Idolatry Distorts Worship

- Turn to **Deuteronomy 4:15-20**.



II. Idolatry Distorts Worship

- Distorted worship leads to distorted worshipers.



II. Idolatry Distorts Worship

- Turn to **Psalms 115:4-8**.
- The same idea is repeated in **Psalms 135:15-18**.
- We become like the idols we worship.



II. Idolatry Distorts Worship

This principle suggests that worshiping or prioritizing idols – whether physical or abstract – shapes a person's character, values, and behavior to reflect the idol's nature – to the idol worshiper's detriment.



II. Idolatry Distorts Worship

- People who idolize **money** will work tirelessly to accumulate it.
- Over time, they become greedy, valuing people and relationships only for financial gain.
- Like money itself, they become cold, transactional, and lifeless.



II. Idolatry Distorts Worship

- A person who idolizes **power** seeks control over others, craving authority or influence.
- They become domineering and anxious, like power itself.
- But power is fleeting and demands constant defense, leading to paranoia or ruthlessness.



II. Idolatry Distorts Worship

- Those who idolize **fame** chase public approval.
- They may obsess over social media likes or recognition.
- They become vain and hollow, like fame itself, which is superficial and fleeting, leading to insecurity and a need for constant validation.



III. God's Jealous Love



III. God's Jealous Love

- Exodus 20:5-6

5 You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me ...



III. God's Jealous Love

- Exodus 20:5-6

... 6 but showing steadfast love to thousands [or “a thousand generations”] of those who love me and keep my commandments.



III. God's Jealous Love

- Deuteronomy 7:9

Know therefore that the Lord your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations.



III. God's Jealous Love

- **1 Corinthians 13:4** (RSV, NASB, NLT)

Love “is not jealous”

- (ESV, NKJV)

Love “does not envy.”



III. God's Jealous Love

- **20:5** Jealous = *qanna* (from *qanah*), used exclusively for God in the Old Testament.
- It denotes God's passionate zeal to protect His covenant relationship with His people.
- He specifically desires to guard their exclusive devotion against idols.



III. God's Jealous Love

- Exodus 34:13-14

13 You shall tear down their altars and break their pillars and cut down their Asherim
14 (for you shall worship no other god, for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God),



III. God's Jealous Love

- Deuteronomy 4:23-24

23 Take care, lest you forget the covenant of the Lord your God, which he made with you, and make a carved image, the form of anything that the Lord your God has forbidden you ...



III. God's Jealous Love

- Deuteronomy 4:23-24

... 24 For the Lord your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.



III. God's Jealous Love

- God wants to protect us from degrading ourselves with the worship of false gods.
- See **Romans 1:21-25**.



The Second Commandment

Exodus 20:4-6

Conclusions

The Second Commandment

Exodus 20:4-6

Conclusions

The Inside and Out Rule:

The Second Commandment

Exodus 20:4-6

Conclusions

The Inside and Out Rule:

- Ezekiel 14:3-5

Son of man, these men have taken their idols into their hearts, and set the stumbling block of their iniquity before their faces. Should I indeed let myself be consulted by them? 4 Therefore speak to them and say to them, Thus says the Lord God: Any one of the house of Israel who takes his idols into his heart ...

The Second Commandment

Exodus 20:4-6

Conclusions

The Inside and Out Rule:

- Ezekiel 14:3-5

... and sets the stumbling block of his iniquity before his face, and yet comes to the prophet, I the Lord will answer him as he comes with the multitude of his idols, 5 that I may lay hold of the hearts of the house of Israel, who are all estranged from me through their idols.

The Second Commandment

Exodus 20:4-6

Conclusions

The Inside and Out Rule:

- Colossians 3:5

Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

The Second Commandment

Exodus 20:4-6

Conclusions

The Inside and Out Rule:

- **Ezekiel** addresses Israel's temptation to adopt pagan idols, while **Colossians** speaks to modern desires for anything earthly other than God.
- Both examples remind us to guard our hearts and keep God in the highest place.

The Second Commandment

Exodus 20:4-6

Conclusions

Every coin has two sides:

- This commandment prohibits idolatry – a negative command.
- What does the positive side look like?

The Second Commandment

Exodus 20:4-6

Conclusions

Every coin has two sides:

- John 5:23-24
- 23 But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. 24 God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.

The Second Commandment

Exodus 20:4-6

Conclusions

Worship in Spirit

The Second Commandment

Exodus 20:4-6

Conclusions

Worship in Spirit

- This means worshiping God with genuine, heartfelt devotion, engaging the inner self – heart and soul.
- Our worship should not rely solely on external rituals or physical images.
- Since “God is spirit,” He goes beyond material forms.
- True worship connects to Him spiritually.

The Second Commandment

Exodus 20:4-6

Conclusions

Worship in Truth

The Second Commandment

Exodus 20:4-6

Conclusions

Worship in Truth

- This involves worshiping God according to His revealed truth, as found in Scripture.
- It is embodied in Jesus (John 14:6, “I am the truth”).
- It rejects false ideas about God or hypocritical worship.
- We focus on His true nature as the one true God.

The Second Commandment

Exodus 20:4-6

Conclusions

Worship in Truth

- 1 John 5:20-21

20 And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true; and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life. 21 Little children, keep yourselves from idols.