



2nd Commandment: No Idols

Video Transcript

Chapter 1: What Are Idols?

00:00-02:03

Tim: The second command, “You will not make for yourself an idol or any likeness of what is in the skies above or on the land beneath or in the waters underneath the land. You will not worship them. You will not serve them.”

The first idol that is made in the story of the Bible, that we know the shape of it, is of a little cow, of a calf. And in terms of archeology, little molten, molded calves or bulls are one of the most common ancient statues. It was either deified and worshiped or used as a representation of divinity.

Jon: So it becomes the thing by which now I have access to this other, greater thing.

Chapter 2: Creating a Form of God

00:53-02:43

Tim: Yes. So why would the biblical authors think that this is a huge problem? There’s one passage in Deuteronomy 4 where you get closest to, like, a reason why. And it’s Moses retelling the story of what happened at Mount Sinai when Israel heard God speak the 10 Commandments.

He says, “So watch yourselves carefully, because you didn’t see any form on the day that Yahweh spoke to you at Mount Horeb from the middle of the fire.” So watch yourself, “so that you don’t act corruptly and make a graven image for yourselves in the form of any carved or shaped figure.”

Also, watch yourselves “so that you don’t lift your eyes up to the skies and see the sun or the moon and the stars, the host of heaven, and be drawn away and worship and serve them. But Yahweh has taken you all and brought you all out of the iron furnace from Egypt, to be a people of his own possession.”

Jon: Okay, yeah. You didn’t see God in any form. And you’re going to have this impulse to try to create a form of God. There’s something dangerous and misguided about trying to create a form to contain Yahweh God.

Tim: There you go. Because remember, Yahweh means “the one who is.” There is just one source of all reality, and that “one who is” is so above and beyond our imagining. And when we reduce that one, God, to something within creation, it diminishes who God is, and it begins to, like, deform our imaginations.

Chapter 3: The Sun, Moon, and Stars

02:43-03:18

Jon: Okay. But all of a sudden, he starts talking about the stars in the sky.

Tim: Right. We’re meditating on an important idea from the seven-day creation narrative, that on days four and six, God makes two categories of rulers.

The first rulers are the rulers of the sky, and it’s exactly these three: the sun, the moon, and the stars. And they’re called *’ot* in Hebrew, “signs” or “symbols” that actually do reflect something really important about the one who is, but they are not the one who is.

Chapter 4: Humans Are the Image

03:18-04:14

Tim: You also have the rulers below. But notice what Moses says here, “The Lord has taken you all,” the Israelites, “and brought you all out of the iron furnace.” Egypt is described as a furnace. And this, I think, is a very subtle reference to the fact that Israel is to imagine themselves as the molten image of God, the actual molten image of God.

Jon: Guys, you’re the image.

Tim: You are the image. That’s right. Humans shouldn’t make images of God because God already made an image of himself, and that is—

Jon: That is humans.

Tim: Humans.

Jon: And it’s not a statue of humans. It’s just humans.

Tim: The living, breathing humans. That’s right.

Jon: The living, breathing humans are God's image. If you want to find connection to Yahweh God, it's other humans. That's pretty profound.

Tim: It's very profound.

Jon: Yeah.

Chapter 5: A Passionate Elohim

04:14-05:40

Tim: So then you get, "because I, Yahweh, your Elohim, am a passionate Elohim."

What God means is, I am passionate for the well-being of my creation. And anything that harms or reduces it, Yahweh is on a mission to get rid of that. "Visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the threes and the fours for those who hate me, but showing loyal love to thousands for those who love me and keep my commands."

What it means, in essence, is that God will allow people to make their bed and sleep in it over the course of many generations. But for those who love God and keep his commands, there will be a reciprocity of infinite generations, thousands of generations, which is basically saying—

Jon: Uncountable.

Tim: Uncountable. Like loyal love from God that's reciprocated by love from humans and honoring God's commands? Now we're talking about what creation is all about.

So put it all together. Every human, male or female, rich or poor, slave or free—every human is an image of God, the unique vehicle of the way divine goodness is present in our world. So don't make an image. Be a faithful image of God.