THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

**Lesson 4 – The Second Commandment – No Graven Images (Part 2)**

**Exodus 20:5-6**

**Introduction**: The late A.W. Tozer once said, correctly, that low thoughts of God are the reason for a thousand lesser evils among us. It is so important that we understand that wrong thinking leads to wrong living. If we do not think of God in a manner appropriate to His revelation of Himself, then we will certainly not live properly *before* God and in relation to God.

So how does all this relate to the Second Commandment? In this way: Nothing could possibly manifest wrong-headed thoughts of God more clearly than *idolatry*. If one makes an idol to assist in his “worship” of God, then he has just revealed his gross ignorance of God, because no image of any part of God’s creation could possibly accurately represent God. Furthermore, since any image fails miserably to represent God, the image becomes the object of worship, which is pure idolatry. God clearly says in V5, “Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them.”

Think about this: That Jehovah God said *“thou shalt not”* is reason enough to not do whatever Jehovah said not to do. However, God in His kindness gives us reason beyond His command to be obedient to this second commandment so closely related to the first. There are three reasons given in verses 5 & 6.

# I. V5 HE REVEALS HIMSELF TO BE A JEALOUS GOD

### **(Note:** Jealous means “to have a zeal for.” (Exodus 34:14))

## A. Jehovah is jealous *for* His people.

### 1. His jealousy is presented in a positive sense. He is jealous *fo*r His people.

### 2. It means that God desires His best for His people.

### 3. Isaiah 42:13 & Isaiah 62:3-4 There are many more such verses throughout the prophets that declare God’s good purpose for His people, which He is zealous to accomplish.

### 4. In John 2:17, when Jesus said, “the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up,” He is saying that He is jealous *for* His Father’s house, the Temple.

### 5. So when God forbids the worship of idol representations, it is *for us*; it comes from His zeal for us!!

## B. Jehovah is jealous *of* His people.

### 1. Hosea 3:1-3 Hosea’s wife had played the harlot and he persisted in trying to restore her to himself. God told Israel that this illustrates His own jealousy of His people.

### 2. It is not an evil jealousy. While we do not have time here to elaborate, we all know that there is an evil jealousy that claims possession in an illegitimate way. This, however, is not even remotely related to the jealousy God exercises.

### 3. God’s jealousy is the most justifiable response to betrayal by those with whom you have made covenant and those whom you loved and who have professed to have loved you.

### 4. God is a jealous God!!

**II. V5b GOD PROMISES TO VISIT INIQUITY UPON IDOLATROUS PEOPLES**

**(Note:** It goes without saying that the visit from God is not a positive thing; it is not a nice, social call from Jehovah. This passage raises questions in the mind of some about the character of God, as the casual reader interprets this as meaning God judges the children for three or four generations for idolatry.)

## A. God does not punish the children for the sins of the father.

### 1. Suggested reading: all of Ezekiel 18.

### 2. Read Ezekiel 18:19-20. There was a saying among captive Israel in Ezekiel’s day. They said the fathers ate the sour grapes and the children’s teeth are set on edge. God said they should not say this anymore, that the children will not be punished for their father’s sins.

## B. What, then, is the meaning of V5?

### 1. It means that the idolatry of the fathers will influence the next generation(s).

### 2. As you read Old Testament Scripture, you will see that God judged the pagan nations after generations of rejection of God. One generation was idolatrous, then another, and another, and another and God judged! The first generation of idolaters causes the problem to begin and judgment fell from the long-suffering God upon the third and fourth generations.

### 3. “…*of them that hate me*.” (V5b) In other words, every generation that rejects God for idols, hates God. Therefore the *judged generation* is judged because they hated God, not because their fathers hated God.

4. The application should be obvious. How I live before God and in relation to God will have effect upon my children. If I influence them against God, then I am assuring God’s judgment upon my grandchildren and their children, etc. *But don’t forget V6!*

# III. v6 it is really very simple: obey god!

## A. V6 This verse is God’s jealousy *for* His people.

### 1. Can you see it? God says to not worship that which is not (any other god). No idols! Because He is holy, He cannot but judge idolatry.

### 2. Obey My commandments and I will *fulfill* My *desire* upon you, My *zeal* for you; I will bless you for thousands of generations!

3. Most people never get out of V5, to see the mercy and grace of God in V6.

## B. No idolatry means the free-flowing mercy of God.

### 1. Surely we want His mercy upon generations after us.

### 2. As we worship God in spirit and truth and according to His Word, *mercy is ours!*