

# How the True God Is to Be Worshipped

## The Second Commandment: Part Two

### Ephesians 3:14-19

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#### **Ephesians 3:14-19**

14. For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
15. Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,  
16. That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man;  
17. That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love,  
18. May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height;  
19. And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God.

#### **The Second Commandment reads:**

Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven 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: 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 showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.

#### **The Heidelberg Catechism reads:**

Q96: What does God require in the second Commandment?

A96: That we in no way make any image of God, nor worship Him in any other way than He has commanded us in His Word.

Q97: May we not make any image at all?

A97: God may not and cannot be imaged in any way; as for creatures, though they may indeed be imaged, yet God forbids the making or keeping of any likeness of them, either to worship them or to serve God by them.

Q98: But may not pictures be tolerated in churches as books for the people?

A98: No, for we should not be wiser than God, who will not have His people taught by dumb idols, but by the lively preaching of His Word.

Last week's sermon focused on the essential core of spiritual worship; this week we will try to look at some of the things that infringe on spiritual worship. Last week we saw:

John 4:24: "God is a spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth"

Romans 12:1,2: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."

"Reasonable" means "of the soul" or "spiritual." There are great implications for this verse which we will expand later, but it is sufficient to say that our service to God must arise from the soul and spirit—it is in the inner man where man encounters God, and God is always present there. True worship is spiritual worship.

This is the essential meaning of the Second Commandment: God cannot be imaged, and our worship must be of the true God who is a Spirit, and cannot be represented by any carnal or earthly or created thing.

There are certain things that are contrary to spiritual worship:

1. To assign to God the attributes of the creature. See Romans 1:

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. Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.

a. This is the reason why the incommunicable attributes are so important.

- i. Independence
- ii. Immutability
- iii. Infinity
- iv. Simplicity. Not composed of parts or pieces that come together to form Him.

b. Without these attributes God is just a creature in our minds, encased in time, and subjected to changes. You may think you are honoring man when you attribute to God the qualities of a man, but God gives you over to immorality and service of the creature.

2. To deny the holiness of God by blurring the distinction between God and man.
  - a. See Psalm 50: God has a complaint against his people—those who offered sacrifices:
    - i. Vs. 1-6: God has a complaint against his people—those who offered sacrifices: Two sins were involved.
    - ii. 7-15. Their worship failed to understand the nature of God.
    - iii. 16-22. The wicked among them simple exacerbated their sins.
    - iv. Vs. 23. The promise to the faithful. The offering of praise.
  - b. What is the church for? If you do not immediately answer “for the worship and the praises of the One true and living God.,” your understanding of the church is defective and might be idolatrous.
  - c. We are called to holiness, to separation unto God who is wholly separate. This separation is not of the body, as though we are to go out of the world; the separation is of the soul and spirit: we are to have no earthly conception of God. We do not worship idols; we do not serve God by them.
3. But What of Jesus Christ: Did He not become a man. Do not pictures and images of Christ re-enforce the incarnation of Christ and do not they have a place in the worship of God. Let the apostle Paul answer: See II Cor. 5:15-17
  - 15 And *that* he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.
  16. Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we *him* no more.
  17. Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, *he is* a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

Here are Calvin’s comments:

“Therefore we henceforth know no man. To *know*, here, is taken as meaning to *reckon*. “We do not judge according to external appearance, so as to reckon that man to be the most illustrious who seems so in appearance.” Under the term *flesh*, he includes all external endowments which mankind are accustomed to hold in estimation; and, in short, everything which, apart from regeneration, is reckoned worthy of praise. At the same time, he speaks more particularly of outward disguise, or as it is termed. He alludes, also, without doubt, to the death of which he had made mention. “Since we ought, all of us, to be dead to the present life, nay more, to be nothing in ourselves, no one must be reckoned a servant of Christ on the ground of carnal excellence.”

“Nay, though we have known Christ. The meaning is — “Though Christ lived for a time in this world, and was known by mankind in those things that have to do with the condition of the present life, he must now be known in another way — *spiritually*, so that we may have no worldly thoughts respecting him.” This passage is perverted by some fanatics, such

as Servetus, for the purpose of proving, that Christ's human nature is now absorbed by the Divinity. But how very far removed such a frenzy is from the Apostle's intention, it is not difficult to perceive; for he speaks here, not of the substance of his body, but of external appearance, nor does he affirm that the flesh is no longer perceived by us in Christ, but says, that Christ is not *judged* of from that.

“Scripture proclaims throughout, that Christ. does now as certainly lead a glorious life in our flesh, as he once suffered in it. Nay more, take away this foundation, and our whole faith falls to the ground; for whence comes the hope of immortality, except from this, that we have already a pattern of it in the person of Christ? For as righteousness is restored to us on this ground, that Christ, by fulfilling the law in our nature, has abolished Adam's disobedience, so also life has been restored to us by this means, that he has opened up for our nature the kingdom of God, from which it had been banished, and has given it a place in the heavenly dwelling. Hence, if we do not now recognize Christ's flesh, we lose the whole of that confidence and consolation that we ought to have in him. But we acknowledge Christ as man, and as our brother in his flesh — not in a fleshly manner; because we rest solely in the consideration of his spiritual gifts. Hence he is spiritual to us, not as if he laid aside the body, and became a spirit, but because he regenerates and governs his own people by the influence of his Spirit.”

We are to be taught by his word and spirit, so as to be filled with His Spirit and exercise the gifts that he has given to us.

We do not know Christ after the flesh. He is not now despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. We see him now as the Son of God:

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

Therefore: Away with your images and crucifixes. Away with your wimpy and feminist pictures of Christ; away with your icons. All you can show is Jesus after the flesh, and knowledge of him after the flesh does no good at all. You must see him as the Son of God and worship Him as God, who was manifest in the flesh.

Amen and Amen.