

Q49. Which is the second commandment?

A49. **The second commandment is, *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.***

Exodus 20:4-9

DQ1: What is an idol? (Define it based on A48 and A49)

DQ2: Who makes an idol?

DQ3: What are we prohibited from doing to an idol?

DQ4: What will God do to an idolater?

DQ5: What evil will befall on the children of idolaters?

Please read and meditate on Isaiah 44.

DQ6: What does Isaiah 44 teach regarding idolatry?

DQ7: What does Isaiah 44 say about those who practice idolatry?

DQ8: Are you able to confidently say that you are not an idolater? If not, why not?

Notes:

In order to clearly understand what an idol is the First Commandment must be clearly understood first. Only when we clearly know who God is, are we able to clearly define an idol. We must remember that outside of God everything and everyone could be an idol. It means you can be an idol unto yourself. It also means your husband, you wife and your children could all be your idols. But, that is not what the Second Commandment teaches us. Then, what does it say about the Second Commandment?

The Second Commandment says that it is man who makes idols. Idol worship is making the images of any creatures and worshipping it. Why did God give the Second Commandment and stated it in such a way? The reason is that God desires God's people to worship Him in accordance with God's prescribed way, not any other way. No figures or images could be alternatives or representations of the one True God. God desires man to worship Him in accordance with the First Commandment and the way in which God has established for man to worship Him. God hates idolatry. Idolaters may believe they are worship God but God will not have anything to do with any worship which is not offered His way.

Idolatry does not lead to worship of God but rather is an attempt to satisfy one's needs. People engage in idolatry because there is a strong desire in them to worship something they can see

and they can touch. Idolaters despise the fact that God is invisible and untouchable. Idolatry is a direct result of sin of man. God knew of the sin nature of man and thus gave the Second Commandment so that man would know what is right and wrong when it comes to properly worshipping God.

Another reason why God gave the Second Commandment is to separate His people from the idolaters. There are some easy ways to separate God's people from those who are not. First, ask whether or not the person acknowledges both the deity and humanity of Jesus Christ. Second, ask whether or not the person's redemption is in Christ. Third, ask whether or not the person is an idol worshipper. Along this line, the Catholic church is very unclear about the Second Commandment. In fact, they conceptually have combined the First and Second Commandments as one commandment rather than keeping them separate. Their teaching on idolatry is wrong.

The Second Commandment teaches us not to make idols, bow down to idols or worship idols. These are not only foolish ways but also not the way in which God prescribed to be worshipped. God does not look kindly upon idol worship. Idol worship inflames God's righteous jealousy as God hates idolaters. To get a glimpse of how bad idolatry is in God's view, we are warned that God will punish idolaters and down to the third and fourth generations down the family line.

God's punishment for idolatry does not end with the idolater but passed on to their children. It is difficult for us to grasp such a punishment. A close examination of history will reveal that God's word is faithful and is true. We can easily trace the family lines of those who were idolaters and determine that the descendants of idolaters do not fare very well. Yet, by God's grace, His punishment will stop instead of continuing down to the thousands of generations.

The idol makers and idol worshipper are foolish. Isaiah 44 gives a vivid picture of such foolishness idolaters. We can see that God laughs at the idolaters. You might ask "how could man be so foolish?" To those of us who know the one true God, the idolaters would seem laughable.