

I Am a Jealous God

Exodus 20:4-6, “You shall not make for yourself a carved image—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; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the n upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.”

Let's pray. Oh heavenly Father God, God that is the Creator of everything that is. Father, we thank You for where You have us, instructing us from Your Word, the clear commandments. Father, the promises of blessing and the promises of cursing as well. Father, we do pray that You would help us as we consider these things, as we consider Your kindness in this law. Father, we do pray that You would help us in our understanding, that You would help us to see those things that offend. Father we pray that You would help Mr. Horn in his preaching and his expounding upon this text Father that we might understand, that we might be washed, that we might have our minds renewed and cleansed, that we might be thinking rightly about the things that would offend. Father, we do pray that You would help us, that You would convict us from where we have idols in our life, from where we have things that we have not put away from the world. Lord we do pray that You would help us and that You would help us to delight in You more and refuse the idols. Father we do pray that You would bless and and instruct us now and that You would help us by Your Spirit. In Jesus' name, amen.

As we continue to go through the commandments, the first was to have no other gods before you besides the One who always was, always has been, and always will be. The second commandment is putting constraints on the first and primary ways that we put other gods before the true God, which is by worshipping images. If you consider the fullness of the law, it's by saying we can come to God in a different way than He commands. After God delivered them He is telling them this is how you avoid destruction. The same things that destroy men today, the breaking of the law of God, God didn't give those laws to hurt His people, He gave them to protect them. He gave those laws because He knew what was in the heart of man that would destroy man. As it says in Deuteronomy 30:15-20, “See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil, in that I command you today to love the Lord your God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments, His statutes, and His judgments, that you may live and multiply; and the Lord your God will bless you in the land which you go to possess. But if your heart turns away so that you do not hear, and are drawn away, and worship other gods and serve them, I announce to you today that you shall surely perish; you shall not prolong your days in the land which you cross over the Jordan to go in and possess. I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live; that you may love the Lord your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He is your life and the length of your days; and that you may dwell in the land which the Lord swore to your fathers,

to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them.”” God gave us this commandment so that we wouldn’t perish. He gave it to Israel so they wouldn’t perish, but He gave it to us so that we wouldn’t perish. We can take these commandments and think they aren’t that significant. No, this is life and death, this is destruction, this is about the cursing or blessing of God. This is about what God is going to do. This is not God playing around, this is God saying, when Moses put those boundaries around the foot of Mount Sinai and said to not cross these or my wrath will break out upon you, that’s what the law does. The law tells us not to cross this or God’s wrath will break out upon you. We are a nation filled with idolatry and we are seeing God’s wrath break out among us in a minor way, but expect it to get worse unless we repent because God gave us His law so that His wrath wouldn’t come out and break out and destroy all of us. The commands were given so that we would receive the blessing of God because we’re warned that this is what our hearts are like, to go after other gods, to go serve other gods. Those who turn from God’s ways, those who turn from worshipping the true God, they will be destroyed, they will perish. In Hebrews it says if this was true for Moses’ law, how much more true is it for Christ’s? How much more will God’s wrath break out upon you if you trample the blood of Jesus Christ underfoot? How much worse will it be for those who profess the name of Christ and turn to idolatry? If this is what God would do for them, what will He do to us who have a far greater understanding? Choose life for you and your descendants. Choosing life means you don’t allow idolatry in your home, you don’t lead people towards idolatry. What it means is you are satisfied with the ways of God, you are satisfied with the revelations. You don’t say you want more or you need more, or you children need more. You say God is enough, Jesus Christ is the way to the Father. You don’t come up with other things, that’s idolatry.

Verse 4 and the first part of 5, “You shall not make for yourself a carved image—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; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them.” You shall not make for yourself a carved image. This is one of those commandments that are easy to twist in certain ways. Maybe Aaron thought it was okay because hey, he didn’t make a graven image, he just made a form and then poured gold into it and he created a molten image. Maybe that’s okay, but the point of the commandment is not to see how close you can come to breaking it, the point of the commandment is to go, this is the worst form of breaking it, but we can break it in lots of other ways. Just like, ‘Thou shalt not commit murder’, Jesus Christ says that means to not even get angry at your brother. We’re not supposed to say how we can twist the commandment or how close we can get without breaking it. Instead we should say this is what causes God’s wrath to break out upon us. We should be careful to not even wander towards it. We need to understand just how standard this is in man’s mind. It’s really easy for us to think of graven images and someone carving a piece of a tree and then putting it out and bowing down before it, that this is something that happened 3,000-4,000 years ago, that this is what the pagan tribes do. But we have to understand, this is what all the religions are about. What is Islam about? They bow down five times a day to Mecca, but if you’re in Mecca, where do you bow down towards? Well, there’s a building that you bow down towards and in that building there’s a silver thing and in that silver thing there is a little black rock. Islam, when they bow down, they are bowing down to an idol. It’s an idol that they claim fell from the sky, that it’s a meteor that fell at the time of Adam

and Eve that indicated the place where they were to build the first altar. They bow down to an idol, that's what Islam does. That's what the Muslims are doing when they have these times, in Nigeria they blow this horn three times a day and then bow down to a rock. This isn't rare, this is the normal state of man. This is where your children want to be. Make sure you understand that, this is where your children want to be, this is what they want to be doing, this is the nature of man. Or how about Hinduism? Hinduism has thousands of gods, three primary gods, Brahma, Ishnu, and Shiva. You realize that this week the leaders of our country prayed to Brahma on the floor of the House of Representatives. They love idols, they love bowing down to idols, this is the nature of man. This is the nature of your unsaved children, this is who they are, don't deceive yourself. This is what they want to do. Hinduism wants to pretend it's thousands of different gods, but that's not what Hinduism is, it's a monotheistic religion, but it says that God is infinite so God is too hard to understand so what we will do is make a different god and carve an image that represents an aspect of Him. We will make a god with lots of arms which represents God's omnipotence. We will make one with lots of eyes that represents His omniscience. They're not saying they're not worshipping the one true God, they're saying to reduce God to different images. Hey, if you don't want one of the images, just make up your own; which is how they got thousands of them. This is the heart of man, this is what man is like. This is about what man was like 5,000 years ago, but it's also what man is like in 2021. Man has not changed. People do this all the time in "Christianity". If you don't like an aspect of the God that those around you are worshipping, go make a different god. Go to the Luthern church in downtown Raleigh who wants to say sodomy is wonderful, that this is the picture of the glory of God. This is the nature of man to make up gods that people are comfortable with worshipping so they aren't confronted with the God of Mount Sinai. They're not confronted with the God whose wrath will break out upon you and you will surely perish if you do these things. They want a god where if you don't like something, you just carve out a new one. How about Buddhism? A religion whose focus is on self-denial uses the image of a fat man who left his wife and children as the object of adoration. God mocks these people. They claim there is no God so they pray to Buddha, a statue that can neither hear nor see. Deuteronomy 4:28, "And there you will serve gods, the work of men's hands, wood and stone, which neither see nor hear nor eat nor smell." In the end, Buddhism puts statues of Buddha to remind them of the idea. You go into a Buddhist's house and you will see a little temple there where they bow down to Buddha. They serve a graven image. This is the nature of man. Roman Catholicism, when we think of the worship of Mary or the worship of the saints and wonder how they could believe that, they also bow down to the elements of the Lord's Table and are called to worship them. That's what they are doing when they have the Lord's Supper. These practices evolved from a different practice, they all come from when the Roman Catholic church said they would stop using the Word of God and they would start teaching using images. We will give pictures and from those pictures the uneducated don't need to know the words, instead they will learn from images and that way they will come to God. You don't come to the Word except with the Word, it's really basic. They said you could come to the Word with images and it doesn't work, it's contrary to how God designed the world. The Roman Catholic church, with all its idolatry and worshipping the pope as the vicar of Christ and with all this garbage they have built up, understand where it starts, it starts with them saying they can make images to worship God. Understand what they did is if you look through history, when the church is being persecuted, what did the pictures of Christ

look like? He was the one being persecuted. After Constantine declared that the Roman empire was Christian, what did the pictures look like? They looked like the conquering king. After the Enlightenment what did they look like? They looked like the idealized Greek hero. You see the similarities with Hinduism because it's the same religion. If you don't like the god, if this is what you want your god to be, you make your god look like that. This is the heart of man, this is the heart of your children, this is what unbelieving children are like. Even now you go into white church and what's the color of Jesus? You go into a black church and what's the color of Jesus? When they have pictures, it's no different than Hinduism, it's the same religion. The fact that they call their god Christ doesn't make it Christian at all, it makes them storing up wrath because they are blaspheming the name of Christ. This all became acceptable after hundreds of years of the church fighting over whether you're allowed to use images or not, this became acceptable in the Second Council of Nicea in 787 A.D. Here's what it said in part, "We defy with all certitude and accuracy...longing for them." They say they will want God because they see images. The Roman Catholic church then proceeded to grow more and more idolatrous, more and more vile, more and more wicked and it stopped being a church of Christ at the Second Council of Nicea because it wasn't about the Word of God, it was about the images of God. So I would say everything we see about Roman Catholicism, all the evil goes back to the rejection of the second commandment of God. Think of the Reformation and what was good about the Reformation, and there were some things that weren't good, but one of the greatest good that the Reformation did is they came in and said you do not use images in worship. After seven hundred years it pleased God to awaken His church and His church said to clean up the images, get rid of them. In many cities there were riots tearing down the many images that the Roman Catholic church had erected. God moved and said if you love Me, keep My commandments; if you love Me, do not make graven images and bow down and worship them. At the time of the Reformation this is what they would have said the Reformation was about, it was about worshipping God the way He said and not the way we want to worship Him. The Roman Catholic church had a vast majority of the wealth in countries like Scotland because they had all these golden idols while their people were starving. They come out and they break and even these people that are tearing down the idols would take the gold and silver and they would use it to feed the poor because God was moving against idols and the world turned upside down. This is not a secondary issue, this is not something that is far off from us. This is here, this is now, this is where the church of Jesus Christ is at this point in time. Think about it, I remember, it had to be fifteen or seventeen years ago that a movie came out called The Passion of the Christ. It was the seven stations of the cross, it was based on the same thing that the Council of Nicea said that it was the only way to teach the ignorant how to worship the true God. Instead of the Protestant church saying, 'This is evil, we should expect God's wrath to break out upon us and for us to be destroyed', instead the Evangelical church bought out movie theatres and they gave out tickets to their unbelieving friends. Evil! This is evil! This is the opposite of how you bring people to Christ, you do not get to the Word through images, the Word brings you to the Word, images do not. That was just a movie, that was just theatrics, but this is still widely done in Christian circles. There's a website that's bragging about how 163 million people saw Jesus Christ, they heard the gospel for the first time because during the pandemic, in the month of April, The Jesus Project who does the Jesus film, had 163 million people watch a movie about idolatry saying this is how you lead people to Christ. It's idolatry, it's

evil, it's feeding the destruction that is in the heart of man and it's propping them up and calling it something to do with Christ when it has nothing to do with Christ. Think of the Wycliffe translators, think of The Seed Company, think of all these Bible translations. Do you know what they do? They translate the gospel of Luke first and because the Jesus film was based on the gospel of Luke, they then stop translating the Bible because the next most important thing to translate in their view is the Jesus film. If you don't think that's idolatry, if you think people really need the Jesus film more than they need the Pentateuch, more than they need the rest of the gospels, more than they need Paul's epistles, the Jesus film is all about idolatry. They pick a false picture of who Jesus Christ is, they have some long-haired hippie because that's who we think Christ is since the sixties and they say this is who Jesus Christ is. No, that's not who Christ is. Christ is the One whose wrath will break out upon you and the church thinks this is evangelism. Are we surprised as a nation we are going mad? Of course we should be going mad, we've blasphemed the name of Christ, we've trampled the blood of Jesus Christ underfoot. Of course we should be going mad as a nation, what do we expect? Romans 10:13-17, "For whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!" But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our report?" So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Anything else that you bring in is a distraction because faith comes by hearing and having pictures there do not help, they hurt. When people come to faith from watching the Jesus film, which Jesus are they following? The one that's in the gospel of Luke or the one they saw on their screen? When they close their eyes and pray, which one are they praying to? The true God who is not seen or the one they saw in the movie? Is it idolatry or is it worship of God? It doesn't mean God can't save people, but according to The Jesus Project, 490 million people have been saved through the Jesus film, that's why our nation has been transformed, that's why the world has been transformed. That's why we have this huge rush of righteousness throughout the whole world, because 490 million people have been saved over the last twenty years. I don't think so, that's ridiculous. That's not what we are seeing around us in any way, shape, or form. What we're seeing is an increase in idolatry. Why? Because the Jesus film is idolatrous, it is a graven image, it is what God at Mount Sinai is saying to not do or His wrath will come out upon you. The church today is running the way of the Gentiles, it's trying to be like Hindu's, it's trying to be like Buddhists, it's trying to be like Islam, it's trying to be like all these things that end in destruction. We're doing the same thing the Roman Catholics did 1,400 years ago. Don't make any likeness of anything. The commandment is not to have any likeness. The word likeness comes from being proportioned like. Again, you can twist it and say that Vishnu is allowed because she doesn't look like anything else in the world, but her arms sure do, her head sure does. It's not anything new, man isn't very creative. What we do is take what God created because He is the Creator and we put them together in different ways, which is what idols are. We're not creative enough to come up with something that's actually new, we just take a man's head and put it on the body of a bull. We take a fishtail and put it on the body of a woman. This is how we make our idols, we're not smart enough to make new things and God is saying to not do this, don't take what He created and use it to make other things that you then

bow down before. Don't make the likeness of anything that is in heaven. God's clear, it doesn't matter where the images are from, we're not to make likenesses. He starts with heaven above and when we hear that it's important for us to remember that Aaron immediately goes and break this, but Aaron, Moses, Joshue, Nadab, Abihu, seventy elders all saw things that descended from heaven. When they go up to Mount Sinai and they see God, they would have seen cherubim and other things there. It's not like they didn't go into the presence of God so they knew some of these things that were in heaven. When God says to put cherubim up in the tabernacle, there were a bunch of people that knew what cherubim looked like because they had just seen them. So when He says those things that you see, don't think that you can make images of them and bow down and worship them. When Ezekiel had a vision of God, he saw a cherubim there because that's who surrounds God at all times. We should think that Aaron, Moses, Nadab, Abihu, and Joshua and the seventy elders saw God with His entourage. They would have seen things from heaven. As we talk about things from heaven it's important for us to recognize that in Greek there are three heavens, in Hebrew there are three heavens and both of them, the word represents all of them. The atmosphere, this is birds flying in the heavens. There's the stars, the stars are in the heavens. And then there is the unseeable place where God dwells, that's the third heaven. When Paul says he went to the third heaven, that's the heaven he is talking about. So we're not supposed to make images of stars and bow down and worship them. You know that star that people put on top of the Christmas tree so their kids go and worship. Oh no, they don't worship, they just bow down to get presents. Let me not confuse things. No, that's called teaching your children to worship. We're not supposed to make images of those to bow down before. Or you can't make birds because those would be images of things in heaven. The picture here is that you can't make anything that appears to be higher than you, whether it's stars or birds or angels, things you can't reach up to. You can't make things that are in the earth beneath, that really means anything that is on the earth. We can't make images of things to bow down to that are the same level of us. Maybe you don't want to reach higher, maybe you want to just make them like you, which is so common, to make carvings of bulls and rats and you name it and they make carvings of it to bow down and worship. Or things that are in the water under the earth. You are not allowed to make images of things that are below you to worship. God is eliminating anything relevant to us for us to worship. We can't do it to things that are greater than us, we can't do it to things that are like us, and we can't do it to things that are lower than us. The heart of man makes images out of all these things. We need to just recognize how pernicious it is, how widespread it is, how easy it is for us to do it. You shall not bow down to them. Bowing down is a sign of worshipping them, prostrating yourself before them, but it doesn't need to be physically prostrating yourself to be worshipping them. If we give them sovereignty, if you allow them to control things, this is prostrating yourself before them. The astrologers that say to give them their reading, their horoscope, so they can know what is going to happen in the future, that's bowing down to them and allowing them to lord over and control you. We're not supposed to say anything in creation is controlling us because things in creation don't control us, it is God who is Lord. Understand what pagan religions like to make images, one reason is so they can say it's not their fault. God is telling them not to make images of things in heaven, on earth, or things under the earth parallels what man has dominion over. Genesis 1:28, "Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over

every living thing that moves on the earth.”” These are the things that we have responsibility to control so you make an image of it and say you’re controlled by that image. It’s flipping on its head where God placed us in created order, it’s by us being irresponsible and saying that they have dominion over us rather than us having dominion over them. It’s rejecting the first commandment God gave, it’s rejecting that God put us in charge. It’s also a sign of submitting to them. When you bow down to a king you say that they have power over you and that you are willingly submitting to them. When we bow down in true worship, it is to acknowledge the power that God has over us. When we bow down to these likenesses, we are giving power to dumb, deaf things. Pretending that we’re controlled by them, which really means that you can do what you want, that’s what they do with the golden calf. When Moses goes down from Mount Sinai he finds all the people naked because they say the calf told them to do that. Who wanted to rise up and play? A piece of gold or the people? All of a sudden they can assign their desires and will, what they want to say is righteous, they assign it to a calf so they have an excuse for their sin. People make idols so that they can say they’re submitting to someone else and they can put their own desires on the things that they are submitting to. This is very normal, this is why most religions have temple prostitutes. This isn’t rocket science, it’s simple. You make a carved image and say it has power and this carved image always tells you to do exactly what you want to do, but now you’re not responsible for doing it. Make sure you’re not making carved images, make sure you’re not making a god who says what you want to hear because this is what it is like, this is why pagan religions do that. If you’ve taken God and said you don’t like those Old Testament laws or the things that He said here or there, understand you are doing exactly the same thing people do who make graven images. They say they will make a god that they like and then he will tell me what I want to do. The fact that you call him Jesus makes him no closer to God because billions of people call their idols Jesus. What God does is not say, ‘Go do what you want to do’, what He says is, ‘I’m giving you laws so that My wrath doesn’t break out upon you so that you don’t perish.’ Graven images lead to destruction, graven images lead to death. God’s commandments lead to life. Do not bow down to them nor serve them. They were not to serve them. Serve is the word for slave so they were not to slave for them. To do what they command you to do because graven images create demands, whether they are out of the carver, the priest or demons, graven images command service, that’s what gods do. With all the commandments, we want to think of them in terms of what we can’t do, but understand when God says don’t serve them, He is also saying to serve Him. It’s important when we consider the commandments, when we consider to not put any Gods before Him, how do we make sure to put God first? It’s not just how do we not serve graven images, but how do we serve God? God tells us to not do this, but He is also calling us to do this. We think that we can serve God and approach God however we want and however seems to be okay with us and that God will find it acceptable, but images don’t even find it acceptable. You have to approach your god the way he says or he’s not god, you’re god. The people who say that God can be approached however they want to approach Him, they’re doing the same thing the image makers do, which is imposing their desires on the image instead of saying God gets to tell us what to do. He says to not serve them because He is a jealous God, but if we do what’s right in our own eyes, does that make Him any less jealous? When we worship Him the way we want to worship Him rather than the way He wants us to worship, does that make Him any less jealous? When we say we’re going to be God rather than this piece of stone, rather than this carved piece of wood,

does that make Him any less jealous? No. He's jealous if we're not serving Him. He's jealous if we're not bowing down to Him. God commands service in all areas of life, but the primary area is in the nature of worship. God gets to determine what is acceptable service. We want to worship God in our own way, but that's a violation of this command. We're not supposed to serve other gods. We're still doing service to a god different than the God of heaven when we say we're going to worship according to the dictates of our own conscience rather than according to the revealed Word of God. The master gets to tell the servant how he wants to be served. The slave doesn't say how he will serve his master, that's not how it works. It's very important to God and you can see the importance by how much He talked about it. What Calvin does, and I don't think this was a good idea, but he said he didn't understand the order of all these laws so what I'm going to do is group them into categories, group them into the category of the first commandment, second commandment, etc. He miscategorized some of them because he rips them out of context, but in general he categorizes them correctly and 40% of all the commandments in Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy, are related to the second commandment and telling us how we are to worship and serve Him. It is far more important to God how we are to serve Him than it is to murder. He spends a lot more time talking about it because serving Him is about declaring who Christ is, it is about saying this is the way to the Father. When we think whatever is right in our own eyes and that we can use images rather than words, we will always lead to a different god. So 40% of all the commandments is about how you worship God. God came, He sent Jesus Christ, He came to earth so that we would worship Him in Spirit and in truth. This is what God came for, to gather worshippers that would worship Him in Spirit and in truth. This is what He testifies to in the Pentateuch. This is what it's about, it's about the worship of God. That's not even counting in the Pentateuch the examples of false worship that happen over and over again like the golden calf or Nadab and Abihu being killed. God is a jealous God, when we approach Him we have to approach Him on His terms and not our own. Part of the reason for God's insistence that we only approach Him to worship Him in the way He commands is because the way He commanded exalts Christ and any other way does not. John 14:6-7, "Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. "If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him."'" This is still true today, not just with the shadows of the Old Testament, but as we read our Bible verses for this quarter, it's about how you find it. You have to find your rest in Christ. If you don't keep the Sabbath you say there is no rest, you say there is another way to God. This is why God's commandments of worship are important because whether it's the preaching of the Word, whether it's the Lord's Supper, whether it's baptism, all these things point to the one way to the Father or they point to a way that goes somewhere else. Those are the only choices. When we make fake images it's not about the Word that brings us to the Father, it's about going to a different God. When the church starts to do this, what it's doing is saying this is the way to the Father when the Bible says this is actually the way to the Father. That's what always happens and the church apostatized and you get Roman Catholicism. I should make some comments about art. When we think of the focus of this commandments being on how we are to approach God, it does put into the perspective the broader use of art. God does not command the Israelites to violate His commandment when He told them to put oxen, lions, pomegranate, olive branches, palm trees, and cherubim in the temple. He's not violating this commandment or giving a special exemption

to this commandment. Numbers 21:8, "Then the Lord said to Moses, "Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a pole; and it shall be that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, shall live."" He's not violating the commandment when He does this, instead God causes them to be delivered through it. Ezekiel 16:10-14, "I clothed you in embroidered cloth and gave you sandals of badger skin; I clothed you with fine linen and covered you with silk. I adorned you with ornaments, put bracelets on your wrists, and a chain on your neck. And I put a jewel in your nose, earrings in your ears, and a beautiful crown on your head. Thus you were adorned with gold and silver, and your clothing was of fine linen, silk, and embroidered cloth. You ate pastry of fine flour, honey, and oil. You were exceedingly beautiful, and succeeded to royalty. Your fame went out among the nations because of your beauty, for it was perfect through My splendor which I had bestowed on you," says the Lord God." God blesses them by making them beautiful. Aesthetics are in line with God's Word and they were not rejected by the second commandment. It was thinking they could come to God through those that are rejected by the second commandment. We should be aware of the risks because what happens when He makes them beautiful? Ezekiel 16:15, "But you trusted in your own beauty, played the harlot because of your fame, and poured out your harlotry on everyone passing by who would have it." We need to understand that there is a place for aesthetics, there is a place for graven images that are not about bowing down, that are not about worshipping, but don't deceive yourself how easy it is for it to shift. It's easy to make it about an image that should be bowed down to. Think about the serpent on the pole that reappears in 2 Kings 18:4, "He removed the high places and broke the sacred pillars, cut down the wooden image and broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made; for until those days the children of Israel burned incense to it, and called it Nehushtan." They took that serpent that wasn't sinful for Moses to make and God blessed them for it. God says here's a picture of Jesus Christ being lifted up in John 3. This was used by God to point to Christ, but they still took it and used it to say it was the end rather than a means to Christ. People can do this with the cross, they can do it with the Lord's Supper. Like I said with the Roman Catholics, they say you have to bow down. I think 18,000 people died in Scotland because they refused to kneel before the elements of the Lord's Supper because they said this was idolatrous. So even what God takes and gives us and says this is an indication of who I am, look at how quickly the heart of man takes that and twists that and perverts that because we're not that different than the Israelites. We're not at all different from the Israelites unless we have been given the Spirit of God. So God commanded us not to make 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 and we're not supposed to serve God by serving any picture of creation. We need to recognize images are okay as long as they don't tempt anybody to worship and if they do, destroy the image. Do what happened in 2 Kings where they say they have kept this around for probably seven hundred years at that point, but as soon as people worshipped it and it turned to idolatry they destroyed it. We need to be willing to do the same in our home if we see something become idolatrous among our children or ourselves, destroy it. It's not worth it, destroy it. Then He says, "For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God." The self-existent one, the creator of all things, the one who was, and is, and always will be. He is the God of whom there is no god before. This is Elohim, the highest magistrate, the law giver, this is who God is. When we treat anybody else like that, God is jealous. We need to consider what it means to be jealous, to be jealous is to think the affections rightly belonging to you are given to another. A husband is

never jealous of his wife if his wife looks at him lovingly. Jealousy is when he thinks she looks at someone else when affection is due him. Or the wife becomes jealous when she thinks the husband is looking at somebody else with affections that are due her. God is not jealous because we come up with ways to bow down to Him and to serve Him are not the ways He commanded, God is jealous because whenever we do that we are worshipping a different God. Even if we call it, remember they called the golden calf Jehovah. They said this was the God that led us out of Egypt and God's wrath broke out upon them and they perished. Consider the Jesus film, they claim every four seconds someone commits to following Jesus because of the movie. God is jealous because of that, God's jealousy is aroused because of that. They're not following the Jesus of the Bible, they're following the Jesus of the Jesus film. When Roman Catholics end up worshipping the saints and Mary, the communion wafer, the fragrance of the true cross, the lady of Guadalupe, or whatever foolishness they come up with, understand where it starts, it started with a really poor impression of the Jesus film, the seven stations of the cross painted on the walls of churches. All that starts the same place, but God is a jealous God. The destruction is enormous when we forget this, when we're using techniques that are not Scriptural for witnessing and proclaiming the gospel, we're not leading them towards Christ we are leading them away from Christ. Matthew 7:13-14, "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it." Whenever we think that we have come up with a new way, it's not a new way to God, it's a new way to another false god, another idol. You can't come up with new ways to the true God because there is only one way to the Father and that is through the Son. There is no other way and people always want to come up with new ways, maybe a film will work better than the Word because it's so hard going around the world and it's too hard to translate so what we should do is put a movie on the screen and say they witnessed to 163 million people. All they are doing is coming up with a new way to come to a false god because there is only one way to the Father and that's through the Son. It's not just the Jesus film, it's Weightlifters for Christ, it's Cowboy churches, it's Golf churches, it's Biker churches, it's all the foolishness going on and the biggest denomination, the conservative Southern Baptists. This is what they have been doing for years, they're not leading people to Christ, they're leading people to a different god, a god who says you don't have to bow down and submit to me, a god who likes for you to go ride bikes, a god who wants you to get up at 4 am to go to church to you can make your tee time. This is real, this is what the SBC does. It's idolatry. They're all on the wide path that leads to destruction. God makes the only path to Himself, which is Jesus Christ. Any path that we make that is not the path that He made, it never leads to Christ because there is only one gate and there is only a narrow path. In this phrase He describes Himself as the Lord our God, He's the Creator, He's the One with authority over us. We need to recognize how many things are widely accepted in the broader church that are truly evil. One of the worst in my understanding is children's Bibles. We look at Aaron and ask how he could make a golden calf, but then we make Jesus Christ into a comic. Which is worse? We have a lot more revelation and yet churches all over this country, all over the world, think it's okay to make Jesus Christ look like Mickey Mouse. They say this won't lead my children to hell, this will lead them to salvation. Guess what? It's not true, it leads them to hell. These are widely accepted in the professing church, that Jesus Christ is a comic. Do we realize how blind we are to idolatry, how accepting we are to idolatry in the church? It's

really easy to look at Aaron and ask how he could do that, he just saw the glory of God, but we have the cross, we have the ascension and we say it's okay to make a comic book Jesus and give it to our children and lead them to hell. That's what it does because God made the only way to Christ, God made the only way to the Father, which was faith. Children's Bible's don't do that, faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God, not by comics of Jesus. It's really easy for us to go back and read Exodus and ask how could they do that and then not notice how we do it all around us, how it's accepted all around us. Will we be like Moses? He went down and saw the golden calf and ground it to pieces and made them drink it. What do you say if you see someone with a children's Bible? Do you say, 'How can you be so much like Aaron?' They saw the lightning, they saw the thunder and the terror and he said to just look at the golden calf that led you out of Egypt so you won't be afraid. We say to look at the cartoon Jesus who is going and holding people's hand and doing all these nice things, and it's not the God of wrath who will break out upon you and you will perish unless you turn to Him. We inoculate them against the gospel because we blaspheme the name of Jesus Christ. He is a jealous God. Jealous in Hebrew is closely related to zealous. God in this phrase is 'El', God is a jealous God, Elohim. Don't ignore this commandment, God does not ignore the breaking of it. Deuteronomy 17:2-7, "If there is found among you, within any of your gates which the Lord your God gives you, a man or a woman who has been wicked in the sight of the Lord your God, in transgressing His covenant, who has gone and served other gods and worshiped them, either the sun or moon or any of the host of heaven, which I have not commanded, and it is told you, and you hear of it, then you shall inquire diligently. And if it is indeed true and certain that such an abomination has been committed in Israel, then you shall bring out to your gates that man or woman who has committed that wicked thing, and shall stone to death that man or woman with stones. Whoever is deserving of death shall be put to death on the testimony of two or three witnesses; he shall not be put to death on the testimony of one witness. The hands of the witnesses shall be the first against him to put him to death, and afterward the hands of all the people. So you shall put away the evil from among you." This is what God says, I'm a jealous God, you go do this and you need to put the people to death and if you won't put them to death and it spreads, burn the city to the ground. That's what God says, He takes it seriously. Do we take it that seriously? God says a violation of this commandment is worthy of death by stoning. Worshipping God in a way He has not commanded is an evil that needs to be put away from us. What idols do you have in your house? Put them away from you, don't take this commandment lightly. This is life and death. This isn't some joke that God doesn't really care. No, God destroys nations over this, God destroyed Israel over this. I would argue that God is destroying our country over this. Understand it, look in your house, ask yourself what things are you using that lead your children to idolatry, what images do you use that make them think this is Jesus when it's not, it's not the way to the Father, it's not the way to salvation. What false worship techniques do you use that are worshipping and serving a different god than the true and living God?

Exodus 20:5c-6, "Visiting the iniquity of the fathers, upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments." The scope of this warning I don't think is just to this commandment. Paul says in Ephesians that the fifth commandment is the first commandment with a promise so

the promise of blessing is not a promise of blessing just for keeping the second commandment, it's a promise of blessing for keeping God's commands in general. It's a promise if you keep the commandments of God, He will bless you and if you don't, He will curse you. God does put it after this commandment for a reason. It's easy to think that they are, that they are too restrictive rather than recognizing they're not. It's easy for us to think if we just use films how much easier it would be, to send the film and they can watch it and come to saving faith. Think how much easier it would be that we can glorify God, but we can't because that doesn't glorify God. We think we can use whatever technique we want to draw near to God, but that is not the way to be nearer to God. God says He will curse you for this. He gives us those commandments and He warns us. They are promises of cursing and we think that's not about hating God, but if you say you don't want the true God and you want a different god, God says that is hating God. If you say, 'My god wouldn't do that', understand your god wouldn't do that but that you're headed to hell because wide is the path to destruction. If your god won't do what the God of the Scriptures does, there is no salvation in that, that's just one of a myriad of gods that man have made that go to one place, hell. The worship of those gods leads you to hell because it's hating the true God. How do you hate the true God? What commands are there that you say, 'That's not right, I'm not going to do that.' That's hating God, don't mix your words and make them lighter to make yourself feel better. If you won't do what God says, you hate God and there is cursing for hating God. God punishes sin and that punishment affects more than just that one generation, it has a ripple through to the third or fourth generation, that's how much the hatred of God affects. Because of the location of the warning, it's not exclusively for worship through graven images, but it specifically includes worship through graven images. We wonder why the church loses 70-90% of their children, it's because they think they can approach God on their own terms and their children say they can approach God however they want and they leave and approach Him a different way. God is cursing the visible church in America because the visible church in America hates God. When they say God's laws go against their Christian liberty, they hate God and God will curse them and it affects the generations after them. They lose their children and say, 'Why me?' It's a fulfillment of this promise. Don't think your ignoring of this commandment is not going to affect your family, it's going to affect your family to the third and fourth generation. "Visiting the iniquity of the fathers, upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me." So what does it mean, 'visiting iniquity'? It doesn't mean the punishment of the father's sin is transferred to the children, they don't receive cursing from God for their father's sin. Jeremiah 31:29-30, "In those days they shall say no more: 'The fathers have eaten sour grapes, And the children's teeth are set on edge.' But every one shall die for his own iniquity; every man who eats the sour grapes, his teeth shall be set on edge." This wasn't God instituting a new policy, it's that people won't say that anymore after the coming of the Holy Spirit, which the promise of the Holy Spirit is Jeremiah 31:31, the next verse. It's saying everybody dies for their own sin, but it doesn't mean that your iniquity doesn't affect other people. After a father puts his children on the broad path to destruction, yes, God can reach down and pluck them up and save them, but their sin had a real effect on their son, and had a real effect on their daughter. People who are putting children's Bibles before their children, it's having a real effect on their children and it will affect them for three generations. God is telling us this so we say we should be serious now, this is really affecting not just me, my laziness about this is affecting far more than me. The children will be punished because they choose to

stay on the wide path, but none of us should desire our iniquity to be affecting our children. But God shows mercy, “but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.” Too often there is a view that the Mosaic law required perfect obedience, most likely by those who say it’s of no use for the law today. Even in the second commandment it says that He shows mercy, mercy means He doesn’t judge everyone according to the law. If He did, then that means there would be no need for mercy, that’s just justice. God is merciful, He doesn’t visit us with all the iniquity that we deserve. The law leads us to know that we need a Savior, but it also teaches us what God desires of us. It’s like saying now that we graduate from school we don’t need to know how to read anymore. No, the fact that we have been led by the law to Christ as a guard that protects us on the way to Christ, doesn’t mean that we then don’t need to worry about the sin in the world. Instead it should mean that now we want to protect ourselves, now we want to know where the boundaries are, now we want to know what God would have us to do. God promises He will show mercy. Notice the promise of forgiveness of sin in this verse. Again, with perfect fulfillment of the law there was never need for mercy, but God didn’t anticipate for us to do that so implicit in this verse is the idea that people who love God, they will fall short and God will show them mercy. That also means we should be seeking God. We need to be saying what would God have us to do and not presuming on His mercy because if we don’t do that, for this is the love of God, to keep His commandments. If we are not pursuing keeping His commandments we shouldn’t expect mercy because mercy is received by those who love God. The question is, do you desire to obey? Do you desire to look at your life? Do you desire to see where you are idolatrous? Calvin said the heart of man is like an idol factory, we constantly produce other gods to worship. Are you fighting against that in your life? God is merciful. Many examples in this sermon I personally committed that I now consider to be sin, but that is sanctification. That only happens when we say these things are serious, these things matter, I don’t want God’s wrath to break out upon me. Don’t seek God on your own terms, seek Him on His terms then you can be thankful for His mercy. I do think the right way to read this is showing mercy not to thousands of people, but to thousands of generations. It contrasts the cursing for two or three generations with God’s mercy, that He will rescue people for thousands of generations, not that He will rescue thousands of people. Think about that, we’re only about two hundred generations into human history, we’re not that many generations in. We all have Noah as an ancestor, there’s no one in this room with an unbelieving parent that God can’t say He will show them mercy because He shows mercy to a thousand generations to those who love Him. God’s blessings are available for the Hindu, God’s blessings are available for the Muslim, God’s blessings are available for anyone on this earth because it’s a lot less than a thousand generations from when they had a father who truly loved God. Your faith affects future generations, your obedience affects those who come after you, your love for God does affect your children and your grandchildren. Hopefully through the preaching of the Word in your home, declaring and walking with your children and saying this is what it looks like to live according to the ways of God. Understand, even if you don’t have that, God shows mercy, God can still rescue. The blood of Jesus Christ is sufficient.

Applications:

1. God uses the term 'jealous' for a reason. He uses it so we can understand His feelings, He's using anthropomorphic language, He's using language that we can understand. When we think of 'jealous' we can have a good understanding of what it means to be jealous. If your spouse would be angry with you if you went out on the internet and said I want the husband or wife that would be good for me so I will go on the internet and find a picture that I like and I will make that the home screen on my phone, or I will tell everybody this is my wife or my husband. Would your spouse be angry with you? When this woman that doesn't look anything like her is on your phone and you tell people that's your wife, of course your wife would be angry with you, she would be jealous. Of course your husband would be angry with you if you had some handsome guy on there instead of the old wrinkly guy you're married to, of course he would be jealous. So God says He is a jealous God so you think about it. When you put that picture up on the wall of that Greek idol and say, 'This is who Jesus Christ is' when Isaiah describes Him as a man who has no form of comeliness so no one will desire Him, do you think God is but a little upset? You can see it, the Roman Catholic church is not a place of hope, it's a place of death. You go to Europe and Roman Catholic churches and they are places of death, it's very obvious. Let's not just go there, what about in America, how many young boys got molested by priests? The Roman Catholic church is under the wrath of God, don't kid yourself, it is under the wrath of God because they think it's okay to use images. God is a jealous God. God put it in those terms so you could think of anything that would cause you jealousy and then think about the all-powerful, all-knowing, omnipresent God having that same feeling and think about that before you would choose something that would be different than what He commands.
2. Don't deceive yourself, images are incredibly dangerous. The second commandment is not to abandon all art, but that doesn't mean that images don't have a real power over men. The serpent that Moses created ended up being worshipped. When things that are commanded by God are turned to idolatry, we should be really careful about things that aren't commanded by God to use. I want to give you a couple of examples. One, red-letter Christians. In the 1900's, a man started printing Bibles with the words spoken by Christ in red and all the rest in black. He said, "It could do no harm, it most certainly could do much good." Today almost all Bibles are printed that way, are we shocked that the church now says the only words of God are the words that Jesus Christ spoke? Think of the destruction that came on because of that simple act of idolatry, to say Jesus Christ's words that He physically spoke rather than inspired men to write, that somehow they have more authority and are more important so you can reject all the law that He wrote, all these things God said He would destroy people for. But how much damage could it do? It's just putting the words in red. It does enormous damage, don't deceive yourself, the power of just changing the color of some letters, how much it has changed a group of people's theology and how much it affects our theology. Red letters stand out so when you flip through the gospels and you see the letters in red, you are more likely to read them. How much does that shift your theology? Be careful about the use of images, they are very dangerous and very misleading. They can have long-term consequences that are very different than what anyone expects. A whole new ideology springs up, which is a lot like what Jefferson said, you cut out a lot of the things you don't

like. Well, if you cut out the things you don't like it's things in the Old Testament, but you keep the things in the New Testament and you say, 'Oh, Jesus loves me.' Then people try to simplify it and say that that's the most important thing to read. Images, visual things, can have huge power over people, don't deny it or ignore it. Another example is that building in Kentucky that Answers in Genesis wants to call a boat. It's not a boat, it's a building and how much does it mislead people and say you can come to God because you have seen what Noah was like. No, you haven't seen what Noah was like, you haven't seen what the ark was like. No, you did not encounter the Ark, what you did was encounter something that was a lie, a building that was pretending to be a boat, that's called a lie and it is not the way to grow your faith, it is not the way to come closer to Christ. It is so easy to lead people astray, to think that they have a handle on God. There is no handle on God and there is only one way to the Father and that is through the Son, not through visiting some building that looks like a boat in Kentucky. We all want to minimize it, we all want to make it seem like God is not a God whose wrath will break out upon you, but we end up misleading and we lead people away from God rather than towards God.

3. Christians are not an ends-based people, we are a means-based people. God says to do it this way, He doesn't promise what the result will be. Sometimes you do it this way and you get stoned to death or burned on a stake. Sometimes you do it this way and revival breaks out and millions of people come to faith. You have Huss a hundred years before Luther saying very much the same thing and one gets killed and the other gets exalted and ends up affecting the world in amazing ways. We don't go for the end, we go for the means and don't think you can shortchange the means to get an end because God will get His end, He is in perfect control of that. The question is if we will obey to get there. Whenever we start to think that we have to achieve this end rather than just following the means God has given us, we are putting ourselves in the place of God and saying we're not a bond-servant of Jesus Christ, instead we are the leader, we are the one who is going to dictate the ends. You can't dictate the ends, all you can do is submit to the means that God dictated. No, you can't come up with the Jesus film because you think you will spread the gospel more, that puts you in charge and you're not in charge.
4. Be satisfied with Christ. All these things come with a dissatisfaction with Christ. God says to preach the Word, this is how faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. Jesus Christ is the Word. When we use images it's because we say the words are not enough, it's always dissatisfaction with Christ, we're saying Jesus Christ is not enough. Be satisfied with the narrow gate. Deuteronomy 4:2, "You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you." We add to it, we want to make movies about scenes in the Bible, we add childish things like Veggie Tales and make Bible stories fun and cute instead of the God of Scripture. These are because of dissatisfaction with the Word of God because our kids won't be engaged, what we need is a cartoon and that would make them happier. Be satisfied with the things that God has given us, the preaching of the Word, loving one another, helping widows and orphans in their distress, talking to your children about God as you live out your life. These are the means God

has appointed us to, these are the means to Christ, be satisfied with Christ. If you need other means, understand the heart of that is that you are dissatisfied with Christ and you don't think He is sufficient. We don't need movies, we don't need pictures, and our children definitely don't need pictures or movies. Far more beneficial for them is to see the gospel lived out by seeing obedience in our own lives, that's how you adorn the gospel. Not by doing a movie up on the screen, but by loving your neighbor, by disciplining your children, by doing the hard work of walking according to the Scriptures, doing the hard work of serving God by loving Him and keeping His commandments. Don't subtract from it, we subtract from it when we say we will just use this picture and represent everything that's there. We subtract from it when we say we will just talk about the red letters and not the whole Bible. Don't add to it, don't subtract from it, both of them lead to destruction and to the worship of a false god. We need to teach the whole counsel of God, we need to not be ashamed of any parts of the Scripture. We need to not skip the parts that are complex and hard to understand because they are all part of Christ. Are you satisfied with Christ or do you want something else? Everything else is calling upon God to be jealous, calling upon God to pour out His wrath, calling upon God to be angry. John's epistle is about knowing whether we truly know God or not, he gives test after test after test and then he ends the book with, "And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen." Don't think idolatry doesn't happen now, keep yourselves from idols. John says to look at all these things to know if you love God. Do you love your neighbor? This is how you know if the truth abides in you, you see that you are a sinner. This is how you know you have a relationship with God and those who have a relationship with God, he ends with a warning, keep yourself from idols. Don't think it won't come in your life because it will and don't show them to your children because they will follow them.

Let's pray. Oh Lord God, we do thank You for this passage. We thank You where You have us, especially as we see the things happening around us, we see so much idolatry, we see so much idolatry of the state Lord. My prayer is that we see it crashing down, which will cause so much destruction, but will cause Your church to repent. Lord we pray as we consider these things, let us make sure that we are applying them to our own lives first. As we see them in Nigeria and hear about them in Nigeria and in Exodus, let us make sure that we are rightly seeing how they manifest themselves in our lives, for You have us here for a reason. Let us not leave here without seeing the seriousness of idolatry. We ask this in Your Son's name, amen.