

## INSIGHT

When the Israelites were camped at the base of Mt. Sinai, they waited for Moses to come back to them...

*When the people saw that Moses was so long in coming down from the mountain, they gathered around Aaron and said, "Come, make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, we don't know what has happened to him."Exo 32:1*

As people who have finite knowledge we are quick to stray from that which we do not understand. We want things that are easily categorized, easily understood, packageable. We are used to packaging the uncontainable, predicting the unpredictable and trivializing the sublime. What we do to our God is not far from what the Israelites did that day at Mt. Sinai. They did not understand God, or what Moses wanted to do and so their trust and faith waned...

*He took what they handed him and made it into an idol cast in the shape of a calf, fashioning it with a tool. Then they said, "These are your gods", O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt."Exo 32:4*

Although initially we might assume that Aaron clearly lost his mind and violated the first commandment, a closer look at what they did reveals to us that this is not the case.

*When Aaron saw this, he built an altar in front of the calf and announced, "Tomorrow there will be a festival to the LORD."Exo 32:5*

You see, when Aaron called the people to a festival to the Lord, he used God's covenant name, YAHWEH. He wasn't just celebrating a feast to an image of a God, but he was telling the people that the golden calf was an image of the God of Israel! They couldn't handle the vastness and sublime nature of God; they couldn't comprehend God's holiness and love. They wanted something predictable, packageable, explainable and visual. They wanted to be able to see their god, touch their god and understand their god. We are the same! Anytime we attempt to define God according to our understanding, we are worshipping an idol, not the God of the Bible. God has revealed Himself to us not so much so that we can understand Him, but to believe Him and trust Him in all that He does and says. To want to represent Him or His Word with anything other than the Bible's teachings applied to our life is against God's will.

*<sup>a</sup> or "This is your god..."*

## *The Heart of God: The Second Commandment Trivializing the Sublime*

### Key Text:

**Exodus 20:4-5a**

*"You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God..."*

### Theme:

In both Hebrew and Greek the word jealousy refers to "single-minded devotion" to an object. In neither has good or bad connotations. The jealousy of the Lord is much nobler than the jealous love of a man and his wife. God is not jealous *of* His people but *for* them. He desires to bless, not punish. God's jealousy for His covenant people reveals His zeal to bless and elevate those who have declared Him their God, according to His first command. He seeks to honor His name among them. To seek Him out in any other way, shape or form that is not in keeping with His Word is to philander with the Divine. And, you see, this prevents you from benefiting of the Divine Plan.

### Application:

Here are some practical suggestions:

1. **Get to know your Lord.** Don't be satisfied with just knowing *about* Him, get to *know Him!* Study His Word!
2. **Don't settle for substitutes.** Is there something missing in your life? Is there an emptiness? Then you really haven't pulled out all the stops! Fill yourself with the Holy Spirit! *Accept NO substitutes!*
3. **Be dazzled by God!** Begin each day with a prayer to be in sync with the Spirit. Let God amaze you by what He accomplishes through your devotion to Him. Be thankful and content with everything!
4. **Develop a godly fear!** Be aware that God is really with you and that He has saved you! Make Him the focus and center of your everyday activities!

**May the Lord richly bless you!**

## SERMON OUTLINE

## Trivializing the Sublime

### Introduction: Last Week

1. The first commandment deals with the object of our worship, YAHWEY, and Him only
2. It is the principal command to observe
  - a. Pride makes a god of self
  - b. Covetousness makes a god of money (greed)
  - c. Sensuality makes a god of the stomach
3. Violation of this dares God to His face

### I. Second Commandment: Teaching on Worship

*Exodus 20:4*

- A. The Prohibition: No Images of God!!!
1. Idolatry reduces God to the physical (*John 4:24*)
    - God is not to be defined in terrestrial terms
    - He is not definable; He is an indefinite spirit
  2. Idolatry makes the truth of God into a lie (*Rom 1:25*)
    - An image is a teacher of lies (*Hab 2:18*)
    - It insinuates God having a body
  3. Idolatry equates God with man (*Isa. 55:8-9*)
    - His ways are not our ways
    - Denominationalism and superstitions make God an idol:
      - a. Mormonism--teaches existence of other gods
      - b. Astrology--Star worship
      - c. Psychic Network--Mind worship

### B. The Reasons For This Prohibition

*Ex. 20:5-6*

1. Idolatry is a form of disloyalty (He is a *jealous* God)
2. Idolatry destroys morality
  - It belittles the Word of God
  - It teaches others to do same (it's passed down)
3. It brings about punishment

### Conclusion: Keep yourselves from idols (1 John 5:21)

*Colossians 3:2-6:*

1. The Focus: Set your minds on the Spirit
2. The Reminder: You have died in Christ
3. The Hope: You will be with Him
4. The Life: Keep yourself from idols (the flesh)
5. The Warning: God will come

### Warm-up:

Is God an idea to you, or is He the Almighty being? What has made you think of God as an idea? What has made you want to make Him predictable and measurable?

### See To It

*Exodus 32:5-7*

1. After sacrificing and worshipping their false image of God, what did the people do?
2. When you study God's Word, or return from a worship service, are you quick to forget the ordinances of God?
3. What is it that keeps you from becoming immoral? Are rules and regulations enough? *See Colossians 2:2-23*

### Seeing It Closer

*Romans 1:21-25*

1. What two things precipitated the downfall of the people being spoken of here?
2. What actions showed the foolishness and darkness of these people's hearts?
3. Is verse 23 just talking about making physical statues and images of God, or can this be referring also to worshipping the One True God under some false form or methodology?
4. Can verse 25 be talking about serving self and other people because of selfish ambition? Could it be talking about serving out of convenience, rather than serving Jesus? *See Colossians 3:17*
5. What then, was the cause of the downfall of morality in these people and in the Israelites we read about in Exodus chapter 32?

### Getting To It:

When religion slides from the sublime to the trivial, the first thing to go is moral restraint. Pray that we, as the bride of Christ, may remain faithful and steadfast in our devotion to the Lord.

## SMALL GROUP STUDY