

Exodus 20:4

*“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;”*

On the top of a mountain covered in smoke, Moses met with God, and heard the standard upon which relationship with God would be established. The Lord gives a list of ten commands that reveal His holiness, and our need for sacrifice. The first four commands reveal things about the nature of God. We learn, along with being jealous, just, merciful, faithful and holy, He is also the only true God and must not be reduced to an image or an idol.

Icons or religious artifacts are a part of every religious system. People cling to manmade objects thinking they are closer to God if they kiss an image, wear a necklace, or carry a religious charm. God makes it clear, this has no place in relationship with Him. It seems to me there are two primary reasons for this. First, no image can adequately represent God. If we try to make something that shows His love, He often looks weak. If we try to replicate His power, it makes Him look tyrannical. If we showcase His mercy, we neglect to reveal His justice and holiness. There is no earthly image that can reveal the majesty of His divine nature. That does not mean we cannot know God, in fact Paul wrote,

Colossians 1:15

*“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.”*

The person of God will never be adequately revealed in a poster, icon or artifact. However, we can see deeply into the nature of God by examining the words and ways of His only begotten Son.

Second, images not only fail to represent God, they also give a false sense of His presence. When we cling to an icon as a reflection of God, we lose sight of the fact that He is ever near His children, and wants us to cry out to Him. We must learn not to look to an image, but beyond the image to the very throne of God, where Jesus sits ready to pour out His grace, mercy, love and power, to help us walk with God.

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