

Theology Simply Explained — WSC51 “Guarding Against Idolatry and Superstition”

Pastor walks his children through Westminster Shorter Catechism question 51—especially explaining how the second commandment forbids coming up with our ways of thinking about God, drawing near to Him, or gaining spiritual knowledge or power.

Q51. What is forbidden in the second commandment? *The second commandment forbiddeth the worshiping of God by images, or any other way not appointed in His Word.*

(The following is a machine-generated transcription. Please be aware of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording via hopewellarp.org)

Shorter, catechism question. This week is, what is forbidden in the second commandment. The answer is the second commandment forbideth the worshiping of God by images or any other way. Not appointed in his word. And so, the second commandment, of course, forbideth the worshiping.

Of God by things that we devised images here is not just those Graven carved things. That many people in in throughout the ages? Throughout history. Have made either to worship directly as if it is God in itself or As a picture of what. Like to think of or how they have thought of the one true God, which if you make a picture of how you think of him, you have just made a infinite reduction of who he is, because who God is in himself, is the real God.

And Think of him as far beneath. And so the only way to have right thoughts about the real God is to think his thoughts after him to be taught by him. From his word. And so the language of forbidding, the worshiping of God by images means really anything that comes from us.

Anything that is an imitation or a copy. God has not actually given us. What? Looks like the most he has done. Of course, is his Divine son, who is the exact imprint of his nature and he has added to himself a human nature. That the human nature, by itself is not the Divine son, the Divine son is now the god man and he is God from From all eternity and you can't make a picture of course.

Of the Divine son. If you were to make a picture just of his Humanity, that would be an ancient church history called nestorianism. In which the nature. Of. The human nature of Christ is separated from the Divine personhood or the divine nature. Of the Lord Jesus Christ. and so sometimes you'll hear people say, well, there is a real human Jesus, so we could use images of him.

Well. The real human. He Jesus neither in his life before his death, nor in his resurrection, gave to his church, to worship him by use of any image of himself. for one number two. We do not have any actual images of the Lord Jesus Christ. So any purported, images are a lie.

and number three, of course, is an historianism even if we had photos. Of the Lord Jesus Christ. they would be they would it would be nestorian. To use the photo in the worship because the photo can capture reflections of light off of the body that the Divine son has in his human nature.

And so it's kind of this tiny little component. And we would put ourselves entirely out of proportion. If we, if our idea of the sun is affected by these photos, or is affected by pictures, which may be one of the reasons why. when we hear a sermon like the one we heard, In the Lord's Day morning.

Sermon And we hear about the Divinity of the In our particular context. We have much difficulty in the church's grasping. The the complete the utter Divinity. Of Christ. That he is very God of very God, of course, the flesh resists that idea to begin with. But in our context, We're riding hundreds of years.

of gross violations of the second commandment, and the pictures have only gotten more detailed more Vivid. Producing more disproportion in in how people think? Of the Savior towards the human side. Separating in that nestorian way. The, the human nature of Christ from his Divine personhood and from his divine nature, And of course, any other image.

that we Have in our mind, you should not think of or, or make pictures of The Holy Spirit either using flames of fire. Or wind, which you can't see, and Jesus makes that point in in John chapter 3 or even doves. When the scripture says he elected upon Christ, As a dove, it's making a theological comment.

About the Holy Spirit. Not saying that there are these pneumatophonies where the Holy Spirit, Goes up like the Ahsoka bird. In moments in history and and takes on physical form as a dove. That's that's utter rubbish and would indeed harm our understanding. Of God the Holy Spirit as well.

So that we would be idolaters with respect to that person of the godhead. And, of course, God is not just in any one of the persons. and so if we make A picture. We are using to represent any one person we have blasphemed. the Trinity, the Triune God, the one living and true God, is in himself three persons.

And so we must not make any images of any one or of all three. Of the person. but then there isn't just The picturing of God that the second commandment forbids, it's also the worshiping of God in any other way. Not appointed in his word. God has given us his statutes.

He has given us his word that That stands for us that has its official place as the only way that we can come to worship him. And if we add anything to his word, if we, and we can use the Redundant word, it'll help us under here, where the, where the words are coming.

If we super add to his statutes, That becomes super stitches. And so the idea of superstition is that we may be able to draw near to God in any way that God hasn't written for us in any way that God has not established for us. In his word established for us in writing.

So any way of drawing near to God or any way of gaining spiritual knowledge or any way of gaining spiritual power. other than that which God has given us in his word, which is himself in his son by his Spirit, according to the scriptures, Any way of drawing near to gaunt.

Any way of thinking about spiritual things especially about God himself, but gaining spiritual knowledge at all any attempt of having having spiritual power at all. Apart from God has revealed in his word is superstitious. It is a violation of the second commandment. It would put us in the category, or at least our actions in the category.

Of the actions of them, that ate me. Which is how he speaks about it in the second commandment which should break our hearts. The, the last thing we would ever want to be, And the last on, Like whom we would ever want to act. Are them that hate. I work God.

The Lord Our God who has delivered us so that he may be cold for us. Yahweh, your God And we should be jealous for him. Even as he is rightly jealous for

himself. So, what is forbidden in the second commandment? The second commandment forbideth The worshipping of God by images.

Or any other way. Not appointed in his word