

Q96. What is God's will for us in the second commandment?

A. That we in no way make any image of God¹ nor worship him in any other way than has been commanded in God's Word.²

1. Deut. 4:15[–19] – “Since you saw no form when the Lord spoke to you at Horeb out of the fire, watch yourselves closely,”

Isa. 40:18 – “To whom, then, will you liken God, or what likeness compare with him?”

Rom. 1:23 – “and they exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling a mortal human or birds or four-footed animals or reptiles.”

Acts 17:29 – “Since we are God's offspring, we ought not to think that the deity is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of mortals.”

2. 1 Sam. 15:23 – “For rebellion is no less a sin than divination, and stubbornness is like iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, he has also rejected you from being king.”

Deut. 12:30 – “take care that you are not snared into imitating them, after they have been destroyed before you; do not inquire concerning their gods, saying, ‘How did these nations serve their gods? I also want to do the same.’”

Matt. 15:9 – “in vain do they worship me, teaching human precepts as doctrines.”

Q97. May we then not make any image at all?

A. God cannot and may not be visibly portrayed in any way. Although creatures may be portrayed, yet God forbids making or having such images if one's intention is to worship them or to serve God through them.¹

1. Exod. 23:24 – “you shall not bow down to their gods or serve them or follow their practices, but you shall utterly demolish them and break their pillars in pieces.”

Exod. 34:13 – “Rather, you shall tear down their altars, break their pillars, and cut down their sacred poles,”

Num. 33:52 – “you shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you, destroy all their figured stones, destroy all their cast images, and demolish all their high places.”

Deut. 7:5 – “But this is how you must deal with them: break down their altars, smash their pillars, cut down their sacred poles, and burn their idols with fire.”

Deut. 12:3 – “Break down their altars, smash their pillars, burn their sacred poles with fire, and cut down the idols of their gods, and thus blot out their name from their places.”

Deut. 16:22 – “nor shall you set up a stone pillar—things that the Lord your God hates.”

2 Kings 18:4 – “He removed the high places, broke down the pillars, and cut down the sacred pole. He broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made, for until those days the people of Israel had made offerings to it; it was called Nehushtan.”

Q98. But may not images be permitted in churches in place of books for the unlearned?

A. No, we should not try to be wiser than God. God wants the Christian community instructed by the living preaching of his Word—¹ not by idols that cannot even talk.²

1. 2 Tim. 3:16–17 – “All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that the person of God may be proficient, equipped for every good work.”

2 Pet. 1:19 – “So we have the prophetic message more fully confirmed. You will do well to be attentive to this as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.”

2. Jer. 10:8 – “They are both stupid and foolish; the instruction given by idols is no better than wood!”

Hab. 2:18–19 – “What use is an idol once its maker has shaped it—a cast image, a teacher of lies? For its maker trusts in what has been made, though the product is only an idol that cannot speak! Alas for you who say to the wood, ‘Wake up!’ to silent stone, ‘Rouse yourself!’ Can it teach? See, it is gold and silver plated, and there is no breath in it at all.”