



[Exodus 32:1-5](#)

(1) And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, then the people gathered themselves to Aaron, and they said to him, "Up! Make us gods which shall go before us, for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him." (2) And Aaron said to them, "Break off the golden earrings which *are* in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring *them* to me." (3) And all the people broke off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought *them* to Aaron. (4) And he took *them* from their hand, and fashioned it with an engraving tool, and made a molten calf. And they said, "These *are* your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt." (5) And when Aaron saw *the calf*, he built an altar before it. And Aaron made a proclamation and said, "Tomorrow *is* a feast to the LORD."

A Faithful Version

Exodus 32:1-4 illustrates how one can twist something into [idolatry](#) that is not directly connected to worship. On the surface, the Israelites were not really seeking a change of gods, but a change of leaders. Some did not like [Moses](#), and besides, he had disappeared. In their impatience, they moved to entrust their leadership to one who could introduce them to a [god](#) similar to what Moses had done. However, they immediately regressed to a god of Egypt because that was all they really knew.

Nevertheless, God and Moses were highly offended because, to them, making the Golden Calf was an Israelite attempt to define God's nature and to control Him according to their desires. A man wrote in an email that he did not care whether the Bible said not to worship as the pagans do through the use of [Christmas](#) and [Easter](#). He was going to do it anyway because it was *his* way of praising God. He is worshipping a god of his own design. He is doing the same thing the Israelites were, except that he carries his false image in his mind.

In a similar way, the pope takes the people's ornaments of gold, silver, ivory, and precious stones, makes a crucifix or Madonna, and says it is only to keep God in mind.

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The principle, however, is exactly the same. It will not be long before people associate the image directly with God, and they need it to perform their prayers of praise and request. In this, the first and second commandments are directly broken.

The carnal emailer wrote, "It is *my way* of praising the Lord" (emphasis added). The carnal Israelites in Moses day proclaimed "a feast to the LORD" ([Exodus 32:5](#)). Both justify themselves based on a false image of God's nature. In contrast, the spiritual God declared that the Israelites were corrupting themselves by worshipping the Golden Calf, and He showed His displeasure by destroying them. People corrupt themselves by defining God's nature to their own ends.

[Mark 7:6-7](#) defines this travesty further: "This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men." [Jesus](#) joined battle with manmade supplements to God's Word, the works of men's hands. People keep traditional religious holidays in God's name, but He is not in them. Despite the outward appearance of sincere piety in keeping them, they are a lie because they simply are not true to God's nature. Celebrating them contradicts a Christian's commitment to truth.

The traditions of which Jesus spoke directly distorted the [law of God](#) and thus the [image of God](#). The law is a description of God's character, the image He wants us to carry in our minds and follow in our conduct. Christ repudiates every addition, subtraction, and distortion elevated to a specious "divine" authority.

— John W. Ritenbaugh

To learn more, see:

[The Second Commandment](#)

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