



Daily Verse and Comment

Exodus 32:1-5

(1) 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." (2) Aaron answered them, "Take off the gold earrings that your wives, your sons and your daughters are wearing, and bring them to me." (3) So all the people took off their earrings and brought them to Aaron. (4) 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." (5) When Aaron saw this, he built an altar in front of the calf and announced, "Tomorrow there will be a festival to the LORD."

New International 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. 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

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