Research: 2nd commandment

Ex 20:4-5

4Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or 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.

**Graven** in Hebrew is *pecel* which means “carved image of an idol; molten image.

“Graven image - Any sort of image is here intended.

As the first commandment forbids the worship of any false god, seen or unseen, it is here forbidden to worship an image of any sort, whether the figure of a false deity [Joshua 23:7](http://biblehub.com/joshua/23-7.htm) or one in any way symbolic of Yahweh (see [Exodus 32:4](http://biblehub.com/exodus/32-4.htm)). The spiritual acts of worship were symbolized in the furniture and ritual of the tabernacle and the altar, and for this end the forms of living things might be employed as in the case of the Cherubim (see [Exodus 25:18](http://biblehub.com/exodus/25-18.htm) note): but the presence of the invisible God was to be marked by no symbol of Himself, but by His words written on stones, preserved in the ark in the holy of holies and covered by the mercy-seat” (Barnes’ Notes).

“**Thou shalt not make,**either in thy mind, or with thy hand,  or by thy command.

**“Unto thee,**i.e. for thy use, or for thee to worship; for otherwise they were not absolutely forbidden to make any images, but only to make them for worship, as may appear by comparing this place with the *setting up of a pillar, or stone*, is as absolutely forbidden *as the making of an image*” (Matthew Poole’s Commentary).

“As the first commandment asserts the unity of God, and is a protest against polytheism, so the second asserts his spirituality, and is a protest against idolatry and materialism” (Pulpit Commentary).

5 Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them.

“Not only inward reverence is forbidden, but also all outward gestures that naturally or customarily express reverence, whether *bowing down* the body, as here; or *bending the knee*, or kissing the idol, or one’s hand towards it. *To them*, nor before them; for *to bow to them*, and *to bow before them*. Nor serve them; or, worship them, either inwardly in thy mind, or outwardly by any sensible mean or sign of worship given to them, as incense or sacrifice, vowing to them, or swearing by them, or the like” (Matthew Poole’s Commentary).