

## Lesson 19

- The letters of Paul 2
- Jesus is crucified
- The LORD alone!

## Lesson 19a

### The letters of Paul 2

In the previous lesson we discussed some of the letters that Paul wrote to the Christians in his time. In this lesson we will continue with the rest of his letters. These letters still have a message for us today. They can assist us in our faith.

#### The letter to the Colossians

The city of Colosse was located in present day Turkey. The bible does not tell us if Paul ever visited Colosse. From the names he mentions at the end of his letter we do know that he knew at least some of the Christians in Colosse. Paul writes this letter when he is in prison in Rome.

Paul sends this letter because he is worried about the Christians in Colosse. He has heard that they receive unbiblical teaching, a mixture of Christian, Jewish and pagan thinking. The teaching undermines the importance of Jesus Christ. In his letter Paul emphasises that Jesus Christ is God. Everything a man needs can be found in Christ.

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Colossians 1-2:15:

Paul explains who Christ is: by Him the invisible God has become visible. Through Him and for Him God has created everything. Everything that exists, exists through Jesus. Paul urges the Colossians to live in unity with Christ and to hold on to the gospel as it was first brought to them. He warns them not to follow teaching that differs from the gospel.

Colossians 2:16-4:18:

Paul explains how the gospel should be evident in the daily life of a Christian.

#### The first letter to the Thessalonians

During his second journey Paul visited the Greek city of Thessalonica. At the time the Christians were persecuted and Paul was forced to leave the city. Because he is worried about the Christians in Thessalonica Paul sends his fellow worker

Timothy to them to encourage them and assist them in their faith.

After a while Timothy returns with good news. Despite the persecution the Christians in Thessalonica have remained faithful to Jesus Christ. When Paul hears that he immediately writes the Thessalonians a letter. He wants to express his joy and make sure there are no misunderstandings amongst them about what a Christian can expect from the future.

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1 Thessalonians 1:

Paul is delighted about the good things he has heard about the Christians in Thessalonica. Throughout the area people have heard about their faith in God.

1 Thessalonians 2:

Paul reminds his readers of the work he did in Thessalonica. He would like to visit the Thessalonians once more but so far he has not had the opportunity.

1 Thessalonians 3:

Paul is grateful to God about the good news that Timothy brought him about the faith and the love of the Thessalonians.

1 Thessalonians 4:1-12:

Paul encourages the Christians to live according to God's will.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:28:

Paul tells the Christians about the second coming of Christ and gives them some last instructions.

#### The second letter to the Thessalonians

After a period of time the Christians in Thessalonica have become very confused about the second coming of Jesus Christ. The Thessalonians are under the impression that it could be any day. Some of them have therefore decided to stop working. There are even Christians who think that the second coming has already happened. For that reason Paul writes a second letter to the Thessalonians. With this letter he wants to put an end to all confusion. He also wants to encourage the Thessalonians as they live in a difficult time.

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2 Thessalonians 1:

When Jesus Christ returns the Thessalonians who now undergo persecution will be heirs of God's kingdom.

2 Thessalonians 2:

Jesus Christ has not yet returned. Before Jesus returns a lot of difficult things will have to happen. Many people will turn their backs on God but the Christians will have to be steadfast in their faith and hold on to what Paul has taught them.

2 Thessalonians 3:

Christians who refuse to work should be disciplined. Everyone needs to work for his own bread.

### **Letters to individuals**

Paul did not only write letters to churches but also to individuals. Four of these letters have been included in the New Testament, two letters to Timothy, one to Titus and one to Philemon. The letters to Timothy and Titus are called the pastoral letters because they contain instructions for pastors and leaders of churches.

### **The first letter to Timothy**

Timothy was a young fellow worker of Paul. His mother was Jewish and his father Greek. He joined Paul on his second and third journeys and helped him with his work. Paul told Timothy to visit a number of churches to assist the Christians in those churches. When Timothy is staying in Ephesus, Paul writes him a letter. In his letter Paul warns Timothy to be on his guard for people who teach unbiblical doctrines. He also gives rules about the practical functioning of a church and he advises Timothy in his work.

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1 Timothy 1:

Paul tells Timothy to silence the people who bring unbiblical teaching.

1 Timothy 2-3:

Paul gives instructions for the church. He gives them rules about prayer and specifies the requirements for elders and deacons.

1 Timothy 4:

Paul encourages Timothy to be a good example to his fellow Christians in both word and deed.

1 Timothy 5:

Paul gives rules about relating to church members and rules for pastors.

1 Timothy 6:

Once again, Paul warns Timothy of the people who bring false teaching. He urges him to stay away from them.

### **The second letter to Timothy**

Paul is in prison and knows that his end is near. He writes Timothy another letter to warn him again against the bringers of false teaching. He also gives Timothy some instructions.

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2 Timothy 1:

Paul encourages Timothy to tell people about Jesus Christ. He also tells him about his imprisonment.

2 Timothy 2:1-13:

Paul tells Timothy to bear his suffering like a good soldier for Jesus Christ.

2 Timothy 2:14-3:9:

Timothy should not be distracted by useless discussions and irrelevant arguments. A difficult time will come. People will only be focussed on themselves and will not want to know about God. Timothy needs to keep such people at a distance.

2 Timothy 3:10-4:22:

Paul gives Timothy a few last instructions. He urges him to bring the message of Jesus Christ to all people whether they want to hear it or not.

### **The letter to Titus**

Paul left his fellow worker Titus behind on the Greek island of Crete. Titus is to help the Christians on Crete. He is to teach

them in the Christian faith and appoint elders and deacons in every church.

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Titus 1:

Paul explains the requirements for elders in a church.

Titus 2:

Paul explains how a Christian ought to behave and asks Titus to speak about this.

Titus 3:

Paul praises God for his love for man. God has given the believers his Holy Spirit and declared them righteous.

### **The letter to Philemon**

Philemon is a distinguished man. He is a Christian and lives in Colosse. Philemon's slave Onesimus has run away from him and gone to Rome. In Rome he met the imprisoned Paul and he became a Christian. Paul would like to keep Onesimus with him but he knows he does not have the right to do so.

Therefore, he sends Onesimus back to Philemon. He gives him a letter in which he asks Philemon to take Onesimus back and regard him from then on as a dear brother because Onesimus has become a fellow Christian.

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Paul thanks God for the fact that Philemon believes in God and openly admits it. He pleads the case of Onesimus and asks Philemon to receive Onesimus in the same way that he would receive Paul.

### **Questions**

1. Why does Paul thank God for the faith of the Thessalonians (1 Thessalonians 2:13)? Should he not thank the Thessalonians themselves?
2. Paul's letters are useful to us. Explain using 1 Thessalonians 5:12-28.

## Lesson 19b

### Jesus is crucified

Jesus tells people that the kingdom of God is at hand and He also shows it through His miracles. Many people highly respect Jesus but the religious leaders do not want to know about Him at all.

### Jesus, the seducer of the people

In the eyes of the Pharisees, the teachers of the law and the priests, Jesus is mistaken on many points. He is on friendly terms with the outcasts of society, with prostitutes and tax collectors. Besides, according to the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, He does not keep God's law. He heals people on the Sabbath. Working on the day of rest deserves the death penalty.

They also accuse Jesus of blasphemy. He says things about Himself that no Jew would say. For example: 'The Father and I are one'. He regards Himself as God's equal.

John 11:50

The Pharisees, teachers of the law and priests see Jesus as a blasphemer, a rebel and a seducer of the people – in short, as someone that they need to get rid of before the whole nation is behind Him.

From his earliest appearances the teachers of the law start to make plans to kill Jesus. The official decision to condemn Him to death is only taken a few years later after Jesus has done such a remarkable miracle that many people have come to faith in Him.

### The cause

A few days earlier Lazarus, a good friend of Jesus died. Jesus now goes to the place where he is buried. People think that He goes to pay him his respects. However, to everyone's surprise Jesus opens the grave. He calls Lazarus. A man who had died four days earlier comes back to life! He comes walking out the cave that he was buried in, still wrapped in linen cloths.

Many of the people who witnessed this miracle come to faith in Jesus. However, in the eyes of the Pharisees and teachers of the law who hear of it, Jesus has now reached the limit. The Sanhedrin is called together in an urgent meeting.

*The Sanhedrin or the High Court was a ruling body of the Jews. It consisted of priests, Pharisees and elders, the heads of families. Under the leadership of the high priest these men rule and administer justice.*

All members of the Sanhedrin agree that the situation is dangerous. If the whole nation follows Jesus they will surely make Him their king. The Romans will regard this as rebellion against their authority and they will intervene and severely punish the Jews. That will mean the end of the power of the Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin therefore decides to kill Jesus. The high priest has a good excuse that will justify the plan:

*'... it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish.'*

The high priest is not aware of the fact that his words are prophetic. He exactly states why Jesus needed to die.

### Trick questions

Now all the Sanhedrin needs is something they can accuse Jesus of. Raising Lazarus from the dead does not really count as a deadly crime.

The members of the Sanhedrin decide that they will attempt to trap Jesus. They will go to Jesus in groups to ask Him trick questions. This way they want to get Him to say something that they can use against Him to condemn Him to death.

For example, they try and get Him to tell the people that they do not need to pay tax to the Roman emperor. If Jesus would have said something like that He could have been given over to the Romans. They would kill Him for saying something like that. However, when the Jews ask Him if they should pay tax to the emperor, Jesus says: 'Show me a coin. Whose picture is

on it?' The Pharisees answer Him, 'The picture of the emperor'. Jesus then gives them an answer that they cannot refute, 'Give the emperor what belongs to him and give God what belongs to Him.'

Even though they cannot trap Jesus with their trick questions, the decision of the Sanhedrin does not alter. They want to get rid of Jesus as soon as possible. The grounds for the accusation are not an immediate worry. First of all, the members of the Sanhedrin want to get hold of Jesus. This does not prove to be easy because Jesus has so many followers amongst the people. Jesus is in Jerusalem at this time and the city is full of Jews who have come from all over the country to celebrate the Passover. It is impossible to arrest Jesus in the midst of all these people.

To their great joy the Sanhedrin receive some unexpected help. One of Jesus' own disciples is willing to hand Jesus over to them. One of the twelve men who have been with Jesus from the beginning now betrays Him for the sake of money. He receives 30 pieces of silver – the price of a slave – for turning Jesus in.

### **Jesus knows what is coming**

Jesus knows exactly what is going to happen to Him. He already prepared his disciples on several occasions for the fact that the priests and teachers of the law will condemn Him to death. He has also told them that his death will only be temporary. After three days He will rise again.

On the evening of his arrest it is again obvious that Jesus knows what is awaiting Him. After He has celebrated the Passover with his disciples, He tells them: 'You will all desert me tonight. But when God has raised me from the death I will go ahead of you to Galilee.'

One of his disciples, Peter, tells Jesus disdainfully that he will never leave Him. However, Jesus answers, 'Before the cock has crowed twice tonight you will have denied knowing me three times'.

### **Jesus is arrested**

Read: Mark 14:43-72

14:45 *Rabbi*: Teacher

14:61-62: *Blessed One/Mighty One*: The Jews would not pronounce the name Jahweh out of fear that they might swear. Instead they would often use a descriptive term.

While Jesus is preparing Himself in prayer for what is to come, the people who have come to arrest Him are already on their way. Judas brings them to the place where Jesus and his disciples are, an olive grove. Because of the darkness it is hard to tell which of the men is Jesus. For that reason he told the men that he would go up to Jesus and greet Him with a kiss – a normal way of greeting someone in eastern cultures. This way the men will know who it is they need to arrest.

The men who have come to arrest Jesus are prepared for the worst. They are heavily armoured. They didn't need to be. If Jesus would not want to be arrested, it would have been impossible for them. This is very clear in Matthew's description of the arrest. To one of his disciples who wants to defend Him with a sword Jesus says: 'Put away your sword. Don't you think I could call on my Father for help? He would immediately help me with twelve armies of angels. How would scripture be fulfilled if that happened? There it is written that this needs to happen.' Jesus allows the men to arrest Him. His disciples, who had only just said that they would never leave Him, flee away.

Jesus is brought to the palace of the high priest. There they try to find a ground on which they can condemn Him to death. It is topsy turvy justice, the sentence has been decided before an accusation is made.

It turns out to be impossible to find an accusation. According to the law there need to be two witnesses of a crime or anything deserving of punishment.

## Jesus is crucified

Many people come up with false accusations against Jesus but the different stories do not match. For a moment it seems that Jesus could be condemned for something untoward He said about the temple. But again the declarations of what He said are not the same.

Finally, when no ground for accusation can be found, the high priest changes his strategy and he tries to make Jesus blaspheme. He asks Him directly, 'Are you the promised Christ, the Son of God?' To the members of the Sanhedrin it is out of the question that Jesus would be the Christ. If Jesus' answer is 'yes' they will have the proof that they need to be able to condemn Him.

Although Jesus has been quiet throughout the trial, He now answers. They have come to the core of the business; this is what He wants to be condemned for. Jesus tells them plainly that He is indeed the Christ. If people do not want to believe Him now they will have to admit it when He returns from heaven.

When the high priest hears Jesus' answer, he is shocked and tears his clothes – in that time that was a way to show immense sadness or shock. At the same time he is relieved, the case can be closed now. Jesus can be condemned. He has said that He is the Christ, the Son of God. In the eyes of the high priest that is a clear case of blasphemy and according to God's law a blasphemer needs to die.

Jesus is hit and mocked. And Peter, who would never leave Him, swears that he has nothing to do with Jesus, 'I don't know that man'.

### Jesus is crucified

Read: Mark 15:1-41

15:23 *wine mixed with myrrh*: a sedating drink

15:31 *Elijah*: a prophet who died long before

In order for Jesus to be condemned to death, the Jews need to bring Him to the Roman governor Pilate. Pilate needs to present the verdict.

The accusation against Jesus is the following: 'He says He is the king of Israel'. Pilate asks the man who stands before him in chains if He really is the king of Israel. 'It is as you say' is Jesus' answer. After that He is quiet, regardless of any other accusations that people try to bring against Him. It must have been strange for Pilate that the accused is not even defending Himself.

Pilate is soon convinced of Jesus' innocence. However, his position is difficult. If he would let Jesus go free, the Jewish leaders are sure to let the emperor know about it. The emperor would not be pleased to hear that Pilate would have let a man go free who regarded Himself as the king of Israel. Pilate does not want to take the decision himself. He suggests to the crowd in front of his palace that he can release Jesus in the light of the Passover celebrations. He expects the people to be pleased with this suggestion because a majority of the Jews is in favour of Jesus. However, having been influenced by the religious leaders the crowd asks for Barabbas, a murderer, to be released instead. Jesus has to be crucified! Pilate has no other way out. He tells his men to flog Jesus and then to nail Him to a cross.

*Crucifixion is the worst punishment for a Jew. The Old Testament says that God curses anyone who is hanged. When Jesus is hanging on the cross it is clear for everyone to see that God has cursed Him, that God does not want to have anything to do with Him.*

After having dressed Jesus up as a king, the soldiers show Him what they think of Him: they hit Him, spit at Him and mock Him. Finally they bring Him to the place where his punishment shall take place. They take his clothes off Him and divide them amongst each other. Then they nail Jesus to a cross. On both sides of Him they hang criminals. The king of the Jews receives a place of honour, in between the criminals.

The soldiers, passers-by, the priests, the teachers of the law and the criminals on the other crosses, all mock Jesus. God allows it. He does not come to his Son's defence. Heaven remains closed. Even the sun disappears from the sky in the middle of the day.

For three hours Jesus hangs in darkness. Then He shouts out to God: 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' When people hear this they mock. They pretend to have misunderstood Jesus and say, 'He is calling Elijah. Let's see if he turns up to save Him!' While they are speaking, Jesus shouts out once more and then breaths his last and dies.

When Jesus has died, something inexplicable happens in the temple. The curtain that separates the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place is torn in two, all the way from the ceiling to the floor. The place of God's presence has become accessible for all. This way God shows how with the death of Jesus a new period has started. The gap that separated man from God has disappeared because of Jesus' death. Whoever believes in Jesus can come straight to God.

### Questions

1. Why do the teachers of the law and the Pharisees want to kill Jesus?
- 2a. What is the high priest's argument to kill Jesus (John 11:50)?
- 2b. What is so remarkable about these words (John 11:51)?
- 3a. What is the attitude of Jesus' disciples before and after Jesus has been arrested? Read Mark 14:10-11, Mark 14:26-31, Mark 14:50-52 and Mark 14:66-72.  
14:30 *disown*: pretending not to know someone
- 3b. What do you think of this attitude?
4. When Jesus is crucified He hangs in between two criminals.
  - a. What is their reaction to Jesus (Mark 15:27-32)?
  - b. What happens after a while (Luke 23:39-43)?
  - c. Can you explain what Jesus meant (Luke 23:43)?

- d. Why does Jesus give that promise to the criminal?
5. What is so important about the suffering and death of Jesus?



## Lesson 19c

### The LORD alone!

Out of love for his people, God liberated the Israelites from the land of Egypt. Out of love for us He freed us from the power of Satan and of sin. In his law God asks nothing but our response to his love.

### To love God and our neighbour

When He summarised the law in two sentences Jesus explained that all God wanted was our love:

Matthew 22:37-39 *'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbour as yourself.'*

The Ten Commandments are not a collection of ten separate, unrelated regulations. Every single commandment is a natural consequence of the commandment to respond to God's love. The Ten Commandments are often grouped as follows:

- To love God
  1. Only God
  2. The worship of God
  3. God's name
  4. God's day
  
- To love our neighbour
  5. Authorities
  6. Life
  7. Marriage
  8. Possessions
  9. What we say
  10. Our hearts

The first four commandments show us how we can express our love for God. The other six commandments show us how we can express our love for our neighbour. In this lesson we will discuss the first two commandments.

### The first commandment

The first commandment is: *'You shall have no other gods before me.'* In other words, we should have no other gods besides God. In Egypt where the Israelites had lived for centuries, people worshipped numerous gods. The land of Canaan, the destination of the Israelites, was also full of idol-worshipping nations.

Between Egypt and Canaan God made a covenant with Israel. He committed Himself to Israel as man who commits to his bride on his wedding day. He promised Israel love and faithfulness. And just like a man can expect faithfulness from his wife, so God also expected faithfulness from his people. Just as a married woman cannot have another man on the side, so the Israelites were not to have any other gods on the side. In a healthy situation the idea should not even occur to the Israelites to start worshipping other gods. They belonged to God and with Him their lives were good.

### Other gods?

There is only one God and that is Jahweh. There are no other gods. The bible shows us that again and again. Why then does God need to tell his people not to worship other gods? People have created gods with their imagination. They would regard objects that God had made as gods in themselves, for example the sun or the moon or rain and fertility. The world of the Israelites was full of idols. The Egyptians worshipped Re, the god of the sun and Min, the god of fertility. The Canaanite peoples worshipped Baal, the god of rain, fertility and prosperity and Ashtoreth, the goddess of love and war. In the New Testament we read about Mammon, the god of money. Obviously, these gods did not really exist but they did exist in the minds of people who did not know God.

The Israelites knew that God was the creator of heaven and earth. They knew that rain, the sun, fertility, sexuality and money were no gods, but rather things that God had made. Nevertheless, it was necessary for God to forbid his people explicitly to worship other gods. Because although the Israelites knew God and knew that He had made everything and reigns over everything, it was still a powerful temptation for them to join the other people in their worship of idols. Throughout the history of Israel this temptation proves to be strong. Especially the god of fertility, Baal, turns out to have a major attraction on the Israelites. In the time of king Ahab, the worship of Baal even became the official religion in the country. That was obviously an enormous insult to God.

### Modern idols

Today there will be no one who still worships Baal. Our society no longer regards the forces of nature, the sun or the moon, fertility or sexuality as gods. However, this does not mean that the first commandment is outdated. In our time people still worship idols, even if we do not call them that. Everything that replaces God and that people turn to for happiness, everything that has the power to rule over man, becomes a god. Money can become our god. We do not literally worship it, but it can become too important. The same goes for things like music, good food, sport, sex, holidays, our partner or our work. None of these things are bad in themselves. They are all gifts from God. However, when one of these things starts to rule over us, it becomes our idol. That is what God warns us against. He wants us to worship Him alone. We need to love Him above any other person or object. He wants to have the first place in our lives. He is not satisfied with a second place or a shared first place. God has loved us so much that He has even given his Son for us. In the first commandment He asks us for our undivided love and faithfulness.

### Other religions

God forbids his people to worship other gods. In our world there are many different religions: Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, etc. What does the first commandment have to say about those religions? Do we need to be as radical about them as about the worship of Baal? Or can we say that in all those different religions people worship the same God? Many people in our time would agree with that. They would say: like all rivers run to the same sea, so all religions come to the same divine being. The Christians might call Him God, the Muslims might call Him Allah – but they mean the same. This point of view might seem good and tolerant but everyone who takes the bible seriously will have to disagree with it. Because it is not right. The God of the bible is not the same as the god of the Muslims and the gods of the Hindus and the divinity of the Buddhists. He is totally different. The contrast between the God of the bible and the gods of other religions is so enormous that they cannot possibly be the same gods. The Christians are not the only ones to say so. Believers in other religions who have studied the bible have to admit it too.

The bible speaks about a unique God. A God who made heaven and earth; who wants to relate to people the way a Father relates to his children; whose Son became man to save men from the disastrous state they had let themselves into. A God who can be reached in only one way: through faith in Jesus Christ.

The first commandment teaches us that we should only worship this God. He is the only one. The other gods that are worshipped in our world are created by man's imagination. They cannot save someone.

### The second commandment

*'You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of*

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*those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.'*

In this commandment God forbids his people to make carved images. He does not so much forbid the Israelites to make carved images of idols, because that was what the first commandment had taught. In this commandment God forbids making images of Him. The Israelites were not to try and make God visible by making images of the sun or moon or stars, or of birds, trees, animals, people or fish. Whatever they could think of to create an image of God – He forbade it. He even warned about his severe punishment were they to disobey it.

To be able to understand this commandment we need to look at the time that the Israelites lived and God gave them the law. In that time the world was full of carved idols. The Egyptians had statues of birds and jackals. They did not worship birds or jackals. They just used them to worship their idols. The Canaanites would sometimes picture Baal as a bull, the symbol of power and fertility.

Why did people make images? They thought they could come closer to their gods in that way and subject them to their power. They believed that their god was present in the image they had made of him and with the image they tried to influence it.

People were often afraid of the power and frivolity of their god. By means of the images they tried to have control over them. This way the gods might do what they wanted.

God did not want the Israelites to take over this habit. He forbade his people explicitly to make an image of Him. This way God showed that He would not be influenced by anyone. The Israelites would never have control over Him. God does only what He wants and does not want to be a toy of man. Besides, who could make an image of God? He is endlessly great and powerful. He is highly exalted over men. It would be

an insult to God if the Israelites would think that they could make an image of Him, the maker of heaven and earth. Not only is it impossible to make an image of God, it is also unnecessary. God is not someone to be afraid of. He does not need to be made harmless because He wants the best for his people. He has made a covenant with them. Neither is it necessary to bring God any closer to us. He is close to us. Day and night He is present with his people.

### **Modern worship of images**

In our Western society people no longer make images of wood or stone to represent God. However, that does not mean that the second commandment is no longer disobeyed. People often have wrong ideas about God and that is just as much the creation of an image.

They imagine God as someone who does not care about a person's daily life or as someone who only threatens to punish but never actually does it. Some people imagine God as a cruel, merciless judge who loves nothing better than to throw people into hell. Or they say that God cannot do anything about the situation in the world and make Him into a powerless teacher who cannot help his classes being a mess.

There are many such ideas about God in our time. The second commandment warns us not to take part in creating such images. If we want to know who God is, we need to let the whole bible speak, not just one or two verses that serve our cause.

### **A jealous God**

The second commandment finishes with a powerful warning. God tells his people that He is a jealous God. That means to say that He does not want the Israelites to worship Him in the wrong way. If they do so, He will punish them. He will punish *'the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me.'* God will not only punish parents, but also their children, grandchildren and great grandchildren.

With these words God warns the Israelite parents that they need to worship Him in the right way. If they do not care what the bible says, if they try to have control over God by making images, it can have disastrous consequences. Not only for them but also for their descendants. Parents who do not take God seriously and disobey his commands influence their children to do the same. God will not only punish the parents who choose the wrong way but also their descendants who will continue on that way after them.

On the other hand God promises also that He will show love to a thousand generations of those who love Him and keep his commandments. When parents give their children the right example God will richly reward them.

### Questions

1. In the light of the first commandment, how should we think about horoscopes and astrology? (*Astrology*: the science that relates the positions of the stars to the characteristics and the fate of people).
2. In the second commandment God says that He will punish *'the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me.'* Does this mean that God punishes children for the sins of their parents? Explain. Also read Deuteronomy 24:16 and Ezekiel 18:20.