

Man as God's Representative and Resemblance: Part 1: God's Image

Genesis Sermon 10 Genesis 1:26b

Theme: Man is an ambassador who has lost his way. We now represent the interests of our Sender's enemy! How can we rightly be called ambassadors any longer?

God's **image** distinguishes us from the animal world. Originally, we were created as God's representatives on earth. How did the Fall affect that?

In Redemption, God's image is **restored** in us. What does that say about our *original* "representation" of God?

Genesis 1:26 And God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness..."

- I. Genesis answers man's **big questions**: *Who are we?* • God's creation, divided from Him by our sin.
How do we return to God? • God retrieves us, promising Christ from the start, Gen 3:15.
 How retrieved? • Justification by faith, Gen 15:5-6
Where are we going? • Judgment is coming again, like the Flood. Christ is the only ark.

II. Outline of Genesis

I. Creation	1-2	IV. Renewed creation	9
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Kid-speak: What's the first book in the Bible? **Genesis**. What's the book we're studying right now? **Genesis**.

III. Genesis Lessons so Far

- A. Creation is the foundational teaching of the Bible, an account Jesus believed, Mk 10:6-8.
- B. Redemption teachings *keep* and *build on* the doctrine of Creation, a cause for praise.
- C. John 1:1-3 repeats "In the beginning," making Christ Mediator of Creation and Redemption.
- D. The days so far
 1. Day 1: Earth & heavens in darkness, v 1-2. **Light**, its division from darkness; their new names, v 3-5. • The better work of Christ shining God's knowledge into us, 2 Cor 4:6.
 2. Day 2: Upper & lower waters separated by an expanse called the heavens (our sky), v 6-8. • The work of distinguishing given to us as an aspiration, 2 Tim 2:20-21.

3. Day 3: Earth and its produce. • We are sown to be sowers, *Jms 3:18*.
4. Day 4: **Light** (v 2) embodied. • We who were darkness are now light in the Lord, *Eph 5:8*.
5. Day 5: Souls for sea and sky. • *All in all* realms will ascribe glory to the Lamb, *Rev 5:18*.
6. Day 6: Land souls near us as teachers. • Called to praise God with us, *Ps 148:10, 14*.
 - a. God's plurality.
 - b. Man as God's image and likeness.

IV. The Idea of God's Creation of Man: God prepared for man's creation by filling the upper and lower regions around him (**sky and sea**) with a vast array of souls suited to those domains, the by situating man's nearest neighbors, **land** animals, around him. Now God makes the caretaker of the earth, MAN. Man is *different* than the animals, made in God's IMAGE, meaning man was made to **represent** God. Man was also made in God's LIKENESS, meaning God gave man a soul that thinks and feels **as** God's own soul does.

How much, if any, of God's image and/or likeness has been lost in the Fall? There's good Bible data to inform us.

V. God Pronounces a New Work

- A. "Let Us make"
 1. Suddenly, but unsurprisingly to Moses, God is an "Us."
 2. That's God's eternal nature, known by us as the Tri-Unity, revealed in Scriptures as the Father, Son, and Spirit, these 3 persons comprising the one, true God.
- B. "We will make" is another way to translate "Let us make."
 1. The regular Hebrew word for "making" and "doing."
 2. The Father, Son, and Spirit 'convene' and decide to make man, but differently than the rest of soul-life created prior to man.

VI. God's Pinnacle Work: Man

- A. "Let Us make **man**"
 1. "Man," Heb., *adam*, 552x. From a root word for redness.
 - a. Our "redness" being both a sign of life, *Lam 4:7*,
 - b. as well now, ironically, as a sign of our stain, *Isa 1:18*.
 2. *Adam* being the proper name for the first man, *Adam*, *Gen 2:19*
 - a. As well as for **mankind**, as in our verse and many others.
 - b. *Ish* being another common word for man and male.
- B. After the Fall, we can slip into bestial senselessness, *Ps 49:12, 20*
 1. But, properly, we are distinct from the animals, "man and beast," *Ps 36:6* +
 2. A distinction robbed from the modern mind.

Kid-speak: After God made all the animals, what did He make that's different from all the animals? Us. People!

3. Our highness married to our lowness are seen together in Ps 82:6-7
 - a. God-likeness in having to decide fellow men's destinies, Ps 82:6,
 - b. but our true selves, "like men," shows the scrap heap the Fall dumped us on, Ps 82:7.
4. Earth was made *for* man, Ps 115:16, for better or worse.

VII. Man Made in God's Image: Old Testament

"In Our **image**"

- A. The Bible teaching on the Image of God is only complete when we consider the Likeness of God alongside it.
 1. My working thesis: Man *in* God's "image" means man as a **representative** of God.
 2. Man made **according to** God's "likeness" = man **resembling** God is his inner makeup.
 - ✘ 3. I will be testing the idea that God's image somehow gives man inherent **dignity**, since that idea shapes much of modern Christian thinking.
 - a. My question: how could God justly consign a creature with true dignity to eternal punishment?
 - b. If we changed the word "dignity" to "rank," it would resolve the issue, but that's not satisfactory to the Image = Dignity folks.
 - ✓ c. And it **is crucial** to defend man's true nature in relation to God, opposing *evolution's* teaching that we are simply animals. But in correcting this naturalistic degradation of man, what kind and degree of positive value does this give man? (Gen 9:6. ↓)
 - d. In this connection, consider Satan. Does he retain his original dignity? Or did he completely deface it in his rebellion? Most people have less problem seeing Satan's original dignity erased.
 4. First, then, image.
- B. "Image," *tselem*, 17x, OT, from a root meaning to shade.
 1. The first 5 occurrences of *tselem* are foundational, Gen 1:26, 27x2; 5:3; 9:6.
 - a. First, in our passage, God made man in His **image**, Gen 1:26-27.
 - ✧ b. Critically, Adam produced children "in his likeness, according to his image," Gen 5:3,
 - c. *reversing* the order of the two words from Gen 1:26.
 - i. Saying, to me, that God had made man as a REPRESENTATIVE and *therefore* man needed to sufficiently RESEMBLE Him for the task;
 - ii. whereas, Adam had children RESEMBLING his inner being, who would *therefore* carry on that human stamp or REPRESENTATION to succeeding generations.

Kid-speak: The Bible says God made us in His image. What does that mean? It means we were supposed to be His **messengers** in the world.

2. Then God decrees capital punishment based on man having been originally made "in the image of God," Gen 9:6.
 - a. (Notice reset mode again; Creation, then Renewed Creation.)

- b. But is this saying that man had continued as God's image-bearer, OR only that man's life was under God's protection in view of man's *original* assignment to represent God (which man had *stopped* doing)?
- c. Gen 9:6 certainly teaches the continued *relevance* of man being made in God's image.
- 3. Notable in the 17 *tselem* instances in the OT is how the image of God *stops* after Gen 9:6.
 - a. The idea of man being a special creature of God continues throughout the OT, cf. Ps 8.
 - b. But no more direct mentions of man as God's image.
- 4. The next 12 occurrences of "image" are of **idols** and **tapestries**, except two 'oddballs':
 - a. "image" as an insubstantial 'shadow' likeness, Ps 39:6;
 - b. a portrayal continued in Ps 73:20.
 - (c. Heb 10:1 differentiates "shadow" and "image" in the Law's picture of salvation.)
- 5. Considering the word "image" *as* something shadowy, per Ps 39:6,
 - a. God's "image" in man confers no immediate, permanent, positive value.
 - b. It's only as we *actually resemble* God that being His shadow does us any good.
 - c. Especially when the shadow (man) has struck a pose of permanent escape from its original. Then the image/ shadow is more of a mockery.

Kid-speak: God made people to be His messengers. After we went against God, did people keep on being His messengers? We are *trying not to be*, fighting against it!

VIII. Man in God's Image: New Testament

- A. "Image" in the NT, *eikōn*, 23x (see our word "icon"); a likeness, statue, or representation.
 - 1. Almost half of these (10) are the image/ statue of the Beast in Revelation.
 - 2. The NT is much more informative about *what God's image means*.
- B. Key (to me) is "image" in Lk 20:24 (with Matt 22:20 and Mk 12:16), of Caesar's picture on a Roman coin.
 - 1. The picture was a likeness of Caesar, *representing* Caesar. It declared him,
 - 2. much like our money, which *represents* our government's backing.
 - 3. This, to me, is the most informative piece of data on how man IMAGES God.
 - a. We were made to **represent** Him on earth.
 - b. Versus our LIKENESS to Him, in which we are **constituted similarly**.
 - 4. We could also use the Beast's image from Revelation, a *representation* of the Beast, even calling men to worship it, Rev 13:15.

C. **Christ** as the Image of God

- 1. 2x the NT speaks of Christ as the image of God, 2 Cor 4:4; Col 1:15

Kid-speak: What person is the main, main, most, most image of God? Jesus!

- ❖ 2. If *Christ* is the image of God, what does that say about *our* being in God's image?
 - a. Our image of God is surely, at its best, *lesser* than Christ's.

- b. As Christ, He is *man* in the image of God. Perfect, as originally designed, *and better*.
- c. Is this not saying that Christ came to RESTORE the image of God? ...
- d. ... and having restored it, He can share that image with us once again? ↙

D. Christians in the image of God

1. Here is the kicker. **Col 3:10** speaks about Christians “having been renewed in full knowledge according to the image of the *One* creating him.”
 - a. Not of their *original* creation in His image;
 - b. rather, our *re*-creation in regeneration, corresponding to our being “renewed” (Gk. compound, “made new again”). This *returns* the image of God to us!
 - ☆ c. That has huge implications. If a Christian is experiencing creation in God’s/ Christ’s image in regeneration, what of God’s image did he have before that?
 - d. It could not be the fulness of it. From Col 3:10, you could even argue we had *none* of it, since it had to imparted in our “renewal.”
 - e. If “image” means representation, this makes sense, since we were *not* representing God before conversion. Now we are *again*.
 - (f. This returned *image* may properly be ours presently *to the same degree* we presently possess righteousness; hence, *ours*, yet still *to be* perfected, Rom 8:29.)
2. Add **2 Cor 3:18**. We, “having beheld *the* glory of the Lord in a mirror, are being changed into the same image from glory to glory, as from *the* Lord the Spirit.”
 - ☆ a. If we are “being changed into” the Lord’s image, we were *not* in His image prior to that.
 - b. I *will* argue for God’s image continued in all men (X. below), but from Col 3:10 and 2 Cor 3:18, it must be a greatly diminished or tarnished image, since the real **substance** of God’s image has to be **RETURNED** to us.

Kid-speak: How do we become God’s messengers again? By making us like Jesus.

IX. Implications of God Restoring His Image at Conversion

- A. Haven’t those who place so much weight on mankind’s continued image of God necessarily *shortchanged* the *renewal* of God’s image in regeneration?
 1. Concerningly, our *return* to God’s image is usually not even part of the conversation.
 2. Is it because our *return* to God’s image downplays man’s *original, inherent* value? Is it that old, precious treasure we instinctively safeguard: our own goodness and worth?
 3. This invites a watered-down Gospel. And haven’t we seen the dilution?
- B. If we would place the emphasis where the Bible does, of God’s image only being (fully) restored in Christ and then in our turning to Him, we would have:
 1. A great comfort to the saints, and
 2. A great tool for the conversion of the lost.

X. God’s Continued Image in Man

- A. But having said all that, we return to Gen 9:6.

- B. Now add to that 1 Cor 11:7, “a man ought not to have the head covered, being the image and glory of God.” (Next time, under God’s *likeness*, we’ll consider Jms 3:9.)
1. Paul’s argument goes back to the original created order of man and woman.
 2. Hence, man as God’s image has immediate relevance, as in Gen 9:6.
 3. “Man ought not,” even if he does.
 4. An argument that Paul only *directly* applies to Christians (11:16), but which by rights all men should honor, just as all men *should* worship and serve God.
- C. The best defense for man’s continued possession of our original composition is in Jms 3:9, but that’s of our “likeness,” to be covered next time.
- D. Man can only be *what God made him*.
1. A. H. Strong’s Systematic Theology continues the thought of Caesar’s “image” on the coin with Jesus’ parable of the lost coin:
 - a. The coin may be lost and defaced, but it did not cease to be a coin.
 - b. But we must take care not to take this further than it is applicable. God does not search out *all* lost coins, only *His* lost coins, the elect.
 2. Most ‘coins’ (people) with God’s original imprint will spend eternity under His punishment. There cannot therefore be *anything inherently redeeming* in God’s image.
- E. But reminder to us to respect the unsaved, 1 Peter 2:17.
1. And dearly love those remade in Christ’s image with us, 1 Peter 2:17.
 2. To dearly love, let’s get together! Rom 12:13; 1 Pet 4:9.

Kid-speak: Since God started off making people as His messengers, should we be good and kind to all people? Yes.

(F. 1 Cor 15:49 seems to speak of *bodily* image in particular.)

Vision: You might say we still represent God; we just do it very badly. You can still see the component nature of God (?),¹ but we *don’t represent His goodness*. We’ve become bad. We *know* about goodness and *claim* goodness, but as opponents of God, ours is more a *DISTORTION* than a *REPRESENTATION* of goodness.

Our whole lives are lived as reflections in a hall of distorted mirrors. We’re still seeing the reflection of an original, able to draw some idea of the original, but with the *distortion* as our lived reality. And *we’re* the ones who distorted *ourselves*, AND we *prefer* our distortion.

How precious, then, should our restoration TO God’s image IN Christ be to us!!

Let us rejoice, give thanks, and sing!

¹ Like God being a car supreme and man being a broken-down piece of junk, barely owning the title ‘car.’ A car lover would say, “Don’t even look at that junk! You’ll get the total wrong idea about cars.” This idea might actually be carried better in God’s LIKENESS.