

# SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

## WEEK2 : ANTHROPOLOGY – WHAT IS THE IMAGE OF GOD IN MAN?

### INTRODUCTION TO THE SERIES

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- In this 6-week series, we are going to look at three systematics...man, sin, and angels.
- Our schedule for the next 7 weeks will be:
  - September 18<sup>th</sup>: Why should we study man?
  - **September 25<sup>th</sup>: What is the Image of God in Man?**
  - **October 2<sup>nd</sup>: None...Worship Conference with Todd Murray**
  - October 9<sup>th</sup>: What makes up a man and his soul?
  - October 16<sup>th</sup>: What is sin and where did it come from?
  - **October 23<sup>rd</sup>: None...Jeff Street here to share about work in Canada.**
  - October 30<sup>th</sup>: What are the full consequences of sin?
  - November 6<sup>th</sup>: What are angels, demons and the believer's defense?

### WHY STUDY THE IMAGE OF GOD IN MAN?

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- Understanding mankind involves grasping the fact man is God's "image" and "likeness.", "The implications of human persons created in the image of God are **immense for theology, psychology, ministry, and Christian living. Ramifications of the imago embrace issues of human dignity and value, personal and social ethics, relations between the sexes, the solidarity of the human family ... and racial justice.**"<sup>1</sup>
- So why should we study this topic... "this concept is crucial to knowing man's nature, identity, function, and relationship to God, his fellow man, and the other creatures."<sup>2</sup>
- **All people, no matter what, carry the image of God with them.** Since we start our anthropology from a Biblical perspective, we must start by knowing and understanding what this means to us.
- It is because we have, for so long, defined man by man's standards that we have lost our own "humanness" which God has given us.
- **If we stop looking at people like image bearers of God, we are going to simply look at them like animals and treat them accordingly.**

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<sup>1</sup> John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, eds., *Biblical Doctrine*, 409–410.

<sup>2</sup> Joel Beeke, *Reformed Systematic Theology* vol 2, 162

## THE IMAGE OF GOD

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- Genesis 1:26 “Then God said, ‘Let us make man **in our image, after our likeness...**’”
- After 5 days of creating, on the 6<sup>th</sup> day, God created man. Unlike the animals, the angels, the plants and the land, man was created **in the image of God.**
- The words *image* and *likeness* here should be taken as being emphatic. The author (Moses) is stressing the fact that man, **and man alone**, was created in the image of God. The repetitious nature of the writing means this is a significant expression. The terms are synonymous, therefore emphatic.
- **I think the very fact that the Bible starts this way should give us a clue as to what God thinks of man and what God wants man to think of himself.**
- “The entire world is a revelation of God, a mirror of his virtues and perfections; every creature is in his own way and according to his own measure an embodiment of a divine thought. **But among all creatures only man is the image of God, the highest and richest revelation of God, and therefore head and crown of the entire creation.**”<sup>3</sup>

### Understanding and Defining the Image of God

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- **Nowhere in the Bible is the Image of God in man precisely defined in one verse.** We must take all verses which speak about being an image bearer, put them together and delineate what they fully mean for us.
- “What does it mean to say that God made us in his image? First of all, we should not try to identify the image with something in us, maybe intellect, emotions, or will. The Bible doesn’t say that there is an image of God in man; rather, it says that man is the image of God. We ourselves—all that we are—are the image of God. Everything in us—intellect, emotions, will, even body—reflects God in some way.”<sup>4</sup>
- Genesis 1:26-27 “Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth. God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.’”
  - Our image and likeness to God is related to having dominion over the whole earth.
- Genesis 5:1 “This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day when God created man, He made him in the likeness of God.”
- Genesis 5:3 “When Adam had lived one hundred and thirty years, he became the father of a son in his own likeness, according to his image, and named him Seth.”
- Genesis 9:6 “Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed, for in the image of God He made man.”

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<sup>3</sup> Anthony A. Hoekema, *Created in God's Image*, 11–12.

<sup>4</sup> John M. Frame, *Salvation Belongs to the Lord* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2006), 88.

- A very important point, man did not lose the image of God *after* the fall. Now we see that because man bears God's image, the death sentence is instituted for murder.
- 1 Corinthians 11:7 "For a man ought not to have his head covered, since he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man."
- James 3:9 "With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God..."
  - People have fundamental value because they are image bearers of God.
- The Hebrew term for "image" signifies a "copy" but also carries the idea of "representation." In the ancient world, a king or ruler would place an image or idol of himself in his realm to symbolize his sovereignty there. When others saw the image, they knew who had control. Likewise, God's image bearers represent God in the world. But unlike lifeless statues, God's image bearers are alive. They should operate as God's representatives and mediators on the earth. Thus, "image" has implications for kingship. While God is the King, God created man as a king, a vice-regent and mediator over the creation on God's behalf.
  - Complementing this word, the Hebrew term for "likeness" can refer to "pattern," "shape," or "form." It signifies something patterned after an original. Its use in **Genesis 1:26** indicates that man is patterned after God; he is a son of God. This understanding is supported by **Genesis 5:3**, which reveals Seth was a son in the "likeness" of his father, Adam. **To join these two meanings together, we can conclude that because he is a son of God, man may function as God's representative.**<sup>5</sup>

### **Theologically Understanding the Truths About the Image of God**

- The image of God is universal to all people of all time in all places. **Nobody is excluded.**
- The image of God is what makes mankind unique, and what makes humans...human.
- Because of being made in the image of God, man can both enjoy their relationship with God and also carry out what God has ordained for them to do. **Animals and plants do not have a relationship with God.**
- "The image is something in the very nature of humans, in the way in which they were made. It refers to something a human *is* rather than something a human *has* or *does*."<sup>6</sup>
  - While I agree with what Erickson says here, who we are is an image bearer, it is also intimately and directly related to what we do, how we relate to God and to others.
  - While there should be a distinction, these two ideas are not separate ideas.
  - For example, **Genesis 1:26-27** says that man, as created in the image of God, has dominion over all the earth. We have dominion because we are image bearers.

<sup>5</sup> Anthony A. Hoekema, *Created in God's Image*, 11–12.

<sup>6</sup> Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 532

- Having dominion is not who we are but a product of who we are as an image bearer.
- Since we are representations of God here on earth, we have unique responsibilities from Him.
- “Image of God does not represent dominion; dominion is the consequence of being in the image of God.”<sup>7</sup>

- Theologically then, the image of God motif highlights the value of man to the Creator.

- Since God created man in His own image this marks a distinct act of God that was separate from the rest of His creative work. This means that man is uniquely valuable to God (**Gen. 9:6**).
- Nobody is created as more or less of an image bearer of God. One person is not more or less valuable.
- The expression, image of God, refers to every way in which man is *like* God.<sup>8</sup>
- **These fall into three main views:**
- **Substantive View:** The image of God refers to that which is structural to man (physical, rational, spiritual).
- **Functional View:** The image of God refers to that which man does (i.e., exercise dominion).
- **Relational View:** The image of God refers to the ability of man to be in relationship with God and others.
- So which position is correct? All three views are closely connected to the image of God, and truth can be gleaned from each of them. **The best view, however, is that the image of God is substantive or structural to man. Function and relationship are the consequences of man being the image of God structurally.** This view acknowledges the importance of function and relationship, yet it casts structure as the basis for accomplishing function and relationship. Since man is the image of God, he is able to exercise dominion and experience relationships. According to **Genesis 1:26–28**, man is made in God’s image (**Gen. 1:26a**), and then he is tasked with ruling and subduing the earth and being in relationship (**Gen. 1:26b–28**).<sup>9</sup>
- “The fact that man is in the image of God means that man is **like God** and **represents God**”<sup>10</sup>
- “The image of God in man is man’s personal, spiritual and moral resemblance to God, including, but not limited to God’s communicable attributes. **In other words, man replicates the infinite God on a finite level in these areas**”<sup>11</sup>
- “By analogy, it is argued that man as originally created was endowed with the **communicable attributes** of God, and **it is this core of characteristics that constitutes the *imago dei***”<sup>12</sup>
- “Man is a being, personal, spiritual, eternal, with moral responsibility and who well resembles his creator, but without ascribing corporeal (fleshly body) to God”<sup>13</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Trevor Craigen

<sup>8</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 444

<sup>9</sup> John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, eds., *Biblical Doctrine*, 413

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. 442

<sup>11</sup> Rolland McCune, *A Systematic Theology*, 2:25

<sup>12</sup> George Zemek, *A Biblical Theology of the Doctrines of Sovereign Grace*, 5

<sup>13</sup> Trevor Craigen

- “While not God himself, man reflects the image of God in wonderful, complex, and mysterious ways”<sup>14</sup>
- I want you to be able to see some of the more common definitions and implications for this topic.
- The reason it is so hard to clearly define is because it is not clearly defined in the Bible.

## HOW DID THE FALL EFFECT THE IMAGE OF GOD IN MAN?

- In the fall of mankind, something ghastly happened. The image of God was severely tarnished. Our ability to mirror His holiness has been greatly affected so that now the mirror is fogged.<sup>15</sup>
- In every aspect of our lives, some parts of the image of God in man has been marred and distorted by sin which came into the world.
- “After the fall, then, we are still God’s image—we are still like God and we still represent God—but the image of God in us is distorted; we are less fully like God than we were before the entrance of sin.”<sup>16</sup>
- The question to ask is *how much of God’s image in us has been marred by sin?*
- We no longer follow God and we are now called children of wrath (before salvation) and only desire to follow after our fleshly desires.
  - Ephesians 2:1-3 “And you were **dead in your trespasses and sins**, in which you formerly **walked according to the course of this world**, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the **sons of disobedience**. Among them we too all formerly **lived in the lusts of our flesh**, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were **by nature** children of wrath, even as the rest.
  - Genesis 6:5 “Then the LORD saw that the **wickedness of man was great** on the earth, and that **every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.**”
- Mankind went from having access to God in the garden to being, by nature, children of God’s wrath. He went from being *very good* (**Gen. 1:31**) to *evil continually* (**Gen 6:5**).
  - Mankind is *still* in **Genesis 6:5** and **Ephesians 2:1-3** without God.
- “It is exceedingly important to understand that although the *imago dei* was beaten up nearly to the point of death at the fall of mankind, it did not ‘pass away.’ **Genesis 9:6** and **James 3:9** unequivocally substantiate this truth that has created great tensions.”<sup>17</sup>
  - **Genesis 9:6** “Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed, for in the image of God He made man.”

<sup>14</sup> MacArthur and Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine*, 414

<sup>15</sup> R. C. Sproul, *Essential Truths of the Christian Faith*, 132

<sup>16</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 455

<sup>17</sup> George Zemek, *A Biblical Theology of the Doctrines of Sovereign Grace*, 5

- James 3:9 “With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God...”
- “Consequently...based upon the retention of the image of God in man, relationships and communications are possible, both on the horizontal and vertical plane. From the anthropological perspective, all men share common ground ontologically and metaphysically. Without this persistence of the image and likeness of God in fallen people, any communication of the Good News would be absolutely futile. Anthropologically there would be no basis for regeneration nor the process of renewal into God’s moral likeness.”<sup>18</sup>

## The renewal of the Image of God in the Christian’s Life

- One of the applications of being born again, being regenerated, is that the image of God is being renewed in us on a daily basis.
- Ephesians 4:24 “...and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.”
- Colossians 3:10 “...and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him...”
- Romans 8:29 “For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren...”
- 2 Corinthians 3:18 “But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.”
- 1 John 3:2 “Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is.”
- As we are being renewed on the inside, internally changed by the Spirit of God, our actions in this life are going to show the image of God more and more.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR BEING AN IMAGE BEARER OF GOD

- “Every single human being, no matter how much the image of God is marred by sin, or illness, or weakness, or age, or any other disability, still has the status of being in God’s image and therefore must be treated with the dignity and respect that is due to God’s image-bearer.”<sup>19</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. 6

<sup>19</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 450

- “The implications of *being* created in the image of God are immense for theology, psychology, ministry, and Christian living. **Ramifications of the imago embrace issues of human dignity and value, personal and social ethics, relations between the sexes, the solidarity of the human family...and racial issues.**”<sup>20</sup>

### **The Desire for Relationships**

- Central to any definition must be the concept of personhood, distinct from all other creation. Man is capable, because of his image bearing, **to have relationships and fellowship.**
- The triune God is three persons in one: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This is the foundational definition of the essential nature of God. For all eternity, the members of the Trinity have enjoyed perfect, personal communion with one another. If God were simply a solitary, unipersonal being—like false gods—he could not be eternally loving, because prior to creation there would have been no one to love. But God is love, and that love was perfectly expressed in eternity past within the Trinity (**John 5:20; 17:24, 26**).<sup>21</sup>
- This is further shone in the fact that God said it was not good for Adam to be alone and that God created man to have a relationship with Him (**Gen. 2:18**).
- This is not because God was deficient in some way. Why did God create man?
  - Isaiah 43:7 “Everyone who is called by My name, and **whom I have created for My glory, whom I have formed, even whom I have made.**”
  - Ephesians 1:11-12 “...also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to **His purpose** who works all things after the counsel of His will, to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be **to the praise of His glory.**”
  - Revelation 4:11 “**Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created.**”
- God created all things, to include man, for His glory...not because He was bored or lonely. The want of relationships by us shows the perfect relationship between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

### **The Value and Dignity of Human Life**

- We value human life, not because of what men do, but because they are known by God. This means that if God has common grace on even the wicked, we too should have the same care for all men.
- Psalm 139:13-16 “For You formed my inward parts; You wove me in my mother's womb. I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Wonderful are Your works, and my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from You, When I was made in secret, and skillfully wrought in the depths

<sup>20</sup> Beck and Demarest, *The Human Person in Theology and Psychology*, 131, quoted in *Biblical Doctrine*, 410

<sup>21</sup> MacArthur and Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine*, 411



of the earth; Your eyes have seen my unformed substance; and in Your book were all written the days that were ordained for me, when as yet there was not one of them.”

- Jeremiah 1:5a “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you.”
- Matthew 10:31 “So do not fear; you are more valuable than many sparrows.”
- Matthew 12:12a “How much more valuable then is a man than a sheep!”
- Man has value in God’s eyes. When we start with man to study man, we look for value in things that are going away, things that are temporal.
- When our value and worth are placed on anything other than God, we will always become disappointed and need to look for something else.
- Now, because we are made in the image of God and because we have value and worth as unique parts of God’s creation, how can we apply that to our daily life.
  - We can now Biblically address murder, abortion and euthanasia.
  - We also can see that because man bears God’s image, we should be against slavery, racism, sexism, any partiality or favoritism.
  - We can now understand the idols which plague our hearts. If we know that we are God’s image bearers, that we are the apex of His creation, then our hearts should belong to Him. We must make sure they are not chasing after something that has been created.
- The greatest danger to man is himself. When we study man based upon man’s perspective, we have put man as the greatest achievement in all the universe, not God. Man becomes his own idol in his own eyes.
  - We cannot understand man without looking at him in reference to God.

## Having Lordship Over the earth

- “In what way man is like God is not specifically and explicitly stated in the creation account, although one may note that certain resemblances to God are implied there. For example, from Genesis 1:26 we may infer that dominion over the animals and over all the earth is one aspect of the image of God. In exercising this dominion man is like God, since God has supreme and ultimate dominion over the earth.”<sup>22</sup>

## CONCLUSION

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- **Relationships:** How we must relate to God and to others.
- **Worth:** Who we are now is defined outside of ourselves.
- **Lordship** (dominion): What we do under authority as those who have authority.

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<sup>22</sup> Anthony A. Hoekema, *Created in God’s Image*, 13–14.