

THE IMAGE AND LIKENESS OF GOD

“Then God said, ‘Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.’ So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.’”

(Gen. 1:26-28).

There are at least four different Hebrew words that can be translated as “image” or “likeness”. In Gen. 1:26, for example, the Hebrew word “*tselem*” is translated as “image”, and the Hebrew word “*demut*” is translated as “likeness”.

- The word “*tselem*” comes from the root word meaning “shadow”. The “image” of God is like a shadow. This is significant for the “image” of God is not stationary. It is alive! God’s shadow moves every time He moves.
- The word “*demut*” comes from the root word meaning “blood”. Since a child has the same blood as his parents it will often bear a “likeness” to them.
- It is obvious that Adam and Eve were somehow like God for He created them in his own “image” and “likeness”.

Two other Hebrew words are used in Exodus 20:4 to warn against idolatry: **“Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth” KJV.**

- In this verse the word “*pesel*” is translated as “image”. It comes from the root word meaning to “carve”. In this verse it refers to a carved image made by man. This “image” is not alive and does not move.
- In this verse the word the word “*temunah*” is translated as “likeness”. It comes from the root word for “species”. All animals of the same species, as you know, are similar in appearance.
- God does not forbid carving a statue of an angel, man, bird or beast as long as you do not worship it. That’s the difference! Exodus 20:5 explains **“Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God”**. Worshiping carved images is idolatry!

BOTH GOD AND MEN HAVE MINDS

There are obviously many ways that man is in the “image” and “likeness” of God. In this brief study, however, we will focus on only one. Both God and men have minds!

- God has a “mind” of his own and can do what He wants to!
- Man also has a “mind” of his own and can do what he wants to!
- The mind of man is superior to the minds of animals, birds, and fish for only man is in the “image” and “likeness” of God.

■ The mind of God, of course, is “omniscient”. God knows everything. The mind of man is therefore inferior to the mind of God in this regard. Our finite mind knows virtually nothing by comparison with the infinite mind of God. Our minds, however, are quite similar when it comes to decision making. Both God and men can do whatever they want to do! No one can force God to change His mind, and no one can for man to change his mind!

Take, for example, the second Psalm. When the kings and rulers of the earth gather together against the Lord and against His Anointed One, He that sits in the heavens will laugh and hold them in derision. No man or group of men, can make God change His mind. No nation, and no group of nations can pressure God into doing something that He does not want to do. The only way we can change the mind of God is by persuasion. If we appeal to God in prayer, there is always the possibility that God will change His mind. When the king of Nineveh, for example, realized that God was going to destroy his city in 40 days he issued a decree: **“Do not let any man or beast, herd or flock, taste anything; do not let them eat or drink. But let man and beast be covered with sack cloth. Let everyone call urgently on God. Let them give up their evil ways and their violence. Who knows? God may relent and with compassion turn from his fierce anger so that we will not perish” (Jonah 3:7-9).** As you know, God did change His mind and did not destroy Nineveh at that time.

The same can be said regarding the mind of man. Powerful Governments can arrest, imprison, and torture a man, but they cannot force him to change his mind against his will. This is why Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were cast into the fiery furnace and Daniel was cast into a den of lions. This is why every one of the twelve apostles were tortured for their faith but not one ever changed his mind about Jesus. We are created in the “image” and “likeness” of God. No one can force God to change His mind, and no one can for a man to change his mind.

NOT EVEN GOD CAN FORCE A MAN TO CHANGE HIS MIND

■ Nothing is more obvious!

■ If God controlled the minds of men Adam and Eve would not have sinned. Cain would not have killed his brother, and there would have been no need to destroy the earth with a flood in the days of Noah.

■ Jesus, as you know, could not force anyone to change his mind and lamented: **“I have come in my Father’s name, and you do not accept me; but if someone comes in his own name, you will accept him” (Jn. 5:43).**

■ Jesus wanted to gather Jerusalem like a hen gathers her chicks under her wings but they would not do it! (Matt. 23:37).

■ Jesus stands at the door and knocks, but it is up to us to open that door (Rev. 3:20).

■ When Jesus comes again, however, things will be different. **“This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed” (2 Thess. 1:7-10).**

■ At that time every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father (Phil. 2:10-11).

- Since Paul knew the terror of the Lord was coming he spent his life trying to “persuade” men to confess Christ and avoid “everlasting destruction” (2 Cor. 5:10-11).

NOTE THE DIFFERENCE

- Animals and birds are not created in the “image” and “likeness” of God.
- The animals and birds therefore had no choice and obeyed God and got on the ark (Gen. 7:1-4), but men had a choice. That’s why Noah could only “persuade” the members of his immediate family to enter into the ark and be saved (Gen. 7:13).
- God sent ten plagues on Egypt. This required obedience from the river, the frogs, the gnats, the flies, etc. Pharaoh, however, could not be “persuaded” to obey God.
- The ravens fed Elijah on the command of God but the widow of Zarephath had to be “persuaded” to do so (1 Ki. 17:1-16).
- A prophet disobeyed God and ate bread and drank water in Bethel, but a lion obeyed God and killed the prophet (1 Ki. 13:1-26). The Bible never mentions an animal that didn’t obey God!
- Twenty loaves of barley bread were automatically multiplied to feed a hundred men but Naaman had to be “persuaded” to dip in the Jordan River (2 Ki. 4:42 – 5:14).
- Jonah “disobeyed” God and fled to Tarshish but a fish “obeyed” God and swallowed Jonah and later spit him out (Jonah 1:1 – 17). After three days inside the fish Jonah was “persuaded” to obey God (Jonah 3:1-3).
- The winds and the waves obeyed Jesus (Lk. 8:25), but Judas betrayed Him for 30 pieces of silver (Matt. 26:14-16).
- Two thieves were crucified with Jesus. They were both in identically the same situation. One of them refused to change his mind and was eternally lost, but the other decided to change his mind and was eternally saved (Lk. 23:39 – 43).
- If we want to be saved we also have to change our mind!

OUR MIND DETERMINES THE WAY WE LIVE

- The way a man thinks is the way he is (Prov. 23:7).
- Those with a reprobate mind live reprobate lives (Rom. 1:28).
- The mind of sinful man is death (Rom. 8:6).
- The lives of unsaved people are corrupted by their thoughts (Eph. 2:3; 4:17 – 19).
- An evil mind causes us to be an enemy of God (Col. 1:21).
- An unspiritual mind puffs us up with pride (Col. 2:18).
- Corrupt people have corrupt minds (Tit. 1:15).
- The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but are designed to demolish arguments and bring every thought into obedience to Christ (2 Cor. 10:4-5).

- Adam and Eve did not sin by accident! They decided in their minds to sin!
- Judas Iscariot did not betray Jesus by accident. He decided in his mind to betray Jesus.
- We are created in the “image” and “likeness” of God. God has allowed us to have such control over our minds that no one can force us to change our minds until we decide to do so!
- If you want to be saved, however, you must change your mind and give it over to God!

CONVERSION REQUIRES A CHANGE OF MIND

- The Greek word for “repentance” is “metanoeo”. This literally means to change your mind!
- Again we emphasize that God doesn’t change your mind, “you” change your mind.
- Revelation 16:8-11 gives two examples of men who suffered great punishment from God without repenting. The first example is of an angel who was given power to scorch and sear men with intense heat. Remarkably, these men, in spite of their pain, cursed God and refused to repent. In the second example an angel poured out a plague on the throne of the beast and plunged his kingdom into darkness. Even though these men gnawed their tongues in agony and pain, they still cursed God and refused to repent!
- The church at Laodicea needed to repent. They were told: **“Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest and repent. Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me” (Rev. 3:19-20).** Please note that even though Jesus rebukes and disciplines, He still doesn’t knock down the door and make us do anything. He lovingly knocks at the door waits for us to open it!
- When you do open the door and invite Jesus into your heart a miracle takes place. **“For if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!” (2 Cor. 5:17)**
- The new creation is not “conformed” by pressure from without, but “transformed” by the renewing of our minds. Note! **“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Rom. 12:2).**
- Paul wrote: **“I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life which I live in the body, I live by the faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (Gal. 2:20).**
- When you are born again God puts his laws into your mind (Heb. 8:10).
- So - **“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 2:5 KJV).**
- When you have the mind of Christ, you will behave like Christ (1 Cor. 2:16).

YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR YOUR OWN SINS

- Because you have control over your mind you will never be able to blame anyone else for what you decide to do!
- **“The soul who sins is the one who will die. The son will not share the guilt of the father, nor will the father share the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous man will be credited to him, and the wickedness of the wicked will be charged against him” (Ez. 18:20).**

■ When Adam sinned he tried to blame Eve (Gen. 3:12). When Eve sinned she tried to blame the serpent (Gen. 3:13). It did not work! Adam and Eve were created in the “image” and “likeness” of God and were totally responsible for their own sins.

■ As we have said, the fact that we are created in the “image’ and “likeness” of God makes it impossible for us to blame anyone else for the decisions we have made. **“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad” (2 Cor. 5:10).**

■ The prodigal son was correct when he said: **“Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son” (Lk. 15:21).**

■ You and I are also responsible for our sins and cannot blame anyone else for the decisions we make!

GOOD NEWS!

■ **“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness” (1 Jn. 1:9).**

■ This change in our mind is so dramatic that it is like being “born again” (John 3:1-17). Being born again requires allowing Jesus to take charge of your mind.

■ When this happens Jesus forgives all of our sins and speaks to the Father on our behalf (1 Jn. 2:1-2).

■ **“Therefore, there is now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:1).**

■ When Jesus controls our mind we want to save others: **“We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Cor. 5:20-21).**

■ **“I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some” (1 Cor. 9:22).**

■ Since you are created in the “image” and “likeness” of God, you don’t have to do it. You don’t have to be reconciled to God! You can choose to reject God and be cast into a lake of fire prepared for the devil and his angels (Matt. 25:41).

■ Please change your mind and stop rejecting God!

“WE IMPLORER YOU ON CHRIST’S BEHALF: BE RECONCILED TO GOD!”