119 MINISTRIES

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# Returning to the Image of God

In the beginning, we are told that mankind was made in the image of God.

**Genesis 1:26-27**

> Then God (Elohim) said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. So God (Elohim) created man in his own image, in the image of God (Elohim) he created him; male and female he created them.

Is all mankind still in the image of God? What is the image of God?

In the effort to find an explicit definition of what constitutes the image of God in the Scriptures, one can be left rather frustrated. Realizing that we are created in God's image is both profound and awesome despite the fact that we are not really told explicitly what that means.

So what does it mean to be created in the image of God? To answer that, we need to examine the Hebrew words for image and likeness. We also need to examine instances in Scripture that references us being in the image of God.

The Hebrew word for image is *tṣelem* (צֶלֶם). Some proposed roots of this word stem from the idea of being cut out or carved. This understanding makes sense as the word is also used in Scripture for images as carved idols. Another likely connection is "to become black or dark, like a shadow." This root also makes sense in the idea that an image is an approximation of an original. It is a likeness. This of course leads us to our next Hebrew word used in Genesis 1:26 in the creation of man.

The Hebrew word for likeness is *dmuwth* (dem-ooth) (דְּמוּת) and is used rather consistently in Scripture in this way. It means that something resembles an original.

Genesis 1:26 offers us the first usage of both of these words, image and likeness, relating the creation of man back to our Creator.

Just before this verse we see the creation of animals, which are not mentioned having been created in the image of God. So, in that way, we already begin to see how man is distinguished from the rest of creation, including animals, because mankind was created in the image of God. There is one massive difference between animals and mankind, and that difference is rooted in our created purpose. That created purpose is rooted in what it means to be the image of God. The proper Hebrew understanding of the word image is critical to arriving to a sound definition of the image of God.

The word צלם (tselem), translated as image, is literally a shadow which is the outline or representation of the original. The image of God is not about appearance, but function. The remainder of this teaching will focus on this.

We see this creation of mankind account mentioned again in Genesis 5.

**Genesis 5:1-2**

> This is the book of the generations of Adam. When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and named them Man when they were created.

After we are reminded how we were created in God's image, we are then told that those who came after Adam, starting with Seth, are created in Adam's image. In a certain way, we departed from our original creation of being in the image of God, and then became the image of Adam.

**Genesis 5:3**

> When Adam had lived 130 years, he fathered a son in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth.

But Adam was created in the image of God, right?

Yes.

So why does YHWH seem to denote Adam having been created in God's image, but then subsequent generations are referred to being in the image of Adam? It is as though there is now a difference between the image of God and the image following Adam. Remember, in Hebrew thought, image is more about function, not appearance. Mankind began to function differently at some point with Adam.

How so?

Simply put, Adam sinned.

Does God sin?

No.

There is no sin in the true image of God. There is no sin in the function of God. There is no sin in the character of God. Likewise, there was no sin in Adam and Eve when they were created in God's image.

So at one time, mankind was without sin, being in the perfect image of God. Adam was created perfect in goal, purpose and function.

**Genesis 1:31**

> And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good.

But something happened with Adam following the problematic event of sin. In sin, mankind as an image of God was corrupted. Things went from very good, to very bad.

In the context of describing the reality and importance of the future resurrection, Paul begins to distinguish how we became, like Seth, in the image of Adam, which leads to death.

**1 Corinthians 15:22**

> For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.

God also does not die. There is no death in the image of God. God is eternal life. At one time, we had eternal life through the Tree of Life, but following sin we now die, and return to dust.

Paul contrasts the image of Adam, which he calls the image of the man of dust, against the image of Messiah Yeshua. Paul elaborates further in just a few verses.

**1 Corinthians 15:47-49**

> The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. As was the man of dust, so also are those who are of the dust, and as is the man of heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.

Paul is referring to the resurrection. The sin that started with Adam results in death, a return to dust.

At the resurrection, we will be restored back to the image of God, just as Yeshua is in the image of God.

**2 Corinthians 4:4**

> In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, **who is the image of God.**

**Hebrews 1:3**

> He (Yeshua) is the radiance of the glory of God and **the exact imprint of his nature**, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,

At the resurrection, we will no longer be corrupted. We will be restored to how Adam was created in the image of God. The only difference is that we will not have the capacity to sin in our resurrected bodies.

**Romans 8:29**

> For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be **conformed to the image of his Son**, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

Prior to the resurrection, when we enter into the faith, we begin the process of conforming back to the image of God. We are being renewed back into the image of God, renewed back into the image of our Creator.

**Colossians 3:10**

and have put on the new self, which is **being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.**

We become a new creation, that we might become the righteousness of God.

**2 Corinthians 5:21**

For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Remember how we defined the Hebrew word for image?

The word צלם (tselem), translated as image, is literally a shadow which is the outline or representation of the original.

So, if it was sin that caused us to depart from the image of God, then it is the lack of sin that actually defines the image of God.

Let's say that again.

If it was sin that caused us to depart from the image of God, then it is the lack of sin that actually defines the image of God.

But, we can do better than this.

We can define the image of God even further than just the lack of sin.

What is sin?

**1 John 3:4**

Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness.

So if sin is breaking the law of God, then the image of God is the opposite of sin. Are you following so far?

What must be the opposite of sin if breaking the law of God is sin?

Obviously, the answer is following the law of God.

If breaking the law of God is sin, then the opposite of sin is following the law of God.

Where do we find the law of God? We find the law of God, the Torah, in the Word of God.

So, the image of God, mentioned in the beginning, is the Word of God.

That sounds like something John said.

**John 1:1**

**In the beginning was the Word**, and the Word was with God, **and the Word was God**.

John begins with this profound statement to set up the importance of Messiah Yeshua in the process of restoring us back to the image of God.

**John 1:14**

> And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Yeshua is the image of God. He is the Word made flesh.

The Torah, the Word, is the character of YHWH. It is His essence, his image.

Adam was also created as a walking Word of God, in the image of God, but he failed. He sinned.

Yeshua, as the "last Adam," did not fail at walking the Word of God.

**1 Corinthians 15:45-49**

> Thus it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being"; **the last Adam (Yeshua) became a life-giving spirit.** But it is not the spiritual that is first but the natural, and then the spiritual. The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. As was the man of dust, so also are those who are of the dust, and as is the man of heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. **Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.**

So, the purpose of our existence is to come back to return back to the image of God, the Torah. Our purpose is to obey the commandments of YHWH.

**Ecclesiastes 12:13**

> The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.

As we obey the Torah, the commandments of God, we are returning back to the image of God. We were originally made in that image, to glorify God, and sin corrupted that image.

Again, the word צלם (*tselem*), translated as image, is literally a shadow which is the outline or representation of the original.

We become representations of YHWH, ambassadors of YHWH, when we walk the Word of YHWH. We are to conform back to the image of God by becoming a new man, and abandoning the old. It is our responsibility to live our lives as representatives of God, acting in the same manner as he would.

Our example in how to do this is through Messiah Yeshua, who walked the image of God perfectly. Through his death and resurrection, we likewise will also be resurrected, not as a man of dust in Adam, but resurrected fully back to the image of God we were purposed to become in His authority, in effect glorifying YHWH for all eternity.

In our obedience to the Torah today, we are returning back to the image of God, which is solidified eternally at our resurrection.

**1 John 3:2**

> Beloved, we are God's children now, **and what we will be has not yet appeared**; **but we know that when he appears we shall be like him**, because we shall see him as he is.

*We pray you have been blessed by this teaching. Remember, continue to test everything. Shalom! For more on this and other teachings, please visit us at [www.testeverything.net](http://www.testeverything.net)*

**Shalom, and may Yahweh bless you in walking in the whole Word of God.**

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