

## LESSON 6 – MAN AS THE IMAGE OF GOD

### PURPOSE

God created man in His image. Though man was created to be like God, he was not to be God. Many people today are confused by the notion that humanity is improving, evolving, and becoming more 'godlike'. This is a terrible deception, as any study of modern history will show that human progress has been merely technological, not moral and spiritual. In this lesson, we will see God's intention when He created man 'in His image.' It is only as we acknowledge our Creator and our need to be restored to our Creator's image that we can be delivered from the curse of sin and death.

### GLOSSARY

**Image** – a likeness or reflection.

**Man** – unless context obviously indicates otherwise, 'man' refers to humanity in general, both males and females.

### THE CROWN OF CREATION

When God completed His work at creation, He looked and saw that it was good. The Lord was pleased with it all – He made no mistakes. But He did not create all things equally. Man was the crown of creation, and the Lord created him to have dominion over all other created things.

Man's creation was unique. The Trinity took counsel before creating man. Not only was man created in God's image, but God Himself breathed the life into the first man, Adam. Then, God gave man authority over creation.

### THE IMAGE OF GOD

The image, or likeness, of God distinguishes man from animals and plants ... even angels. Though we share some common traits with other created beings, we are also very different because of our unique nature.

Man is a person, not an animal. This very statement, once accepted as common sense, has been increasingly under attack by those who neither know their Creator nor His purpose for their lives and for humanity. But Scripture and history show us clearly that man has some very distinct characteristics:

**Reason** – God spoke to and commanded man.

**Response** – Man is called upon to respond to God; each person is either a covenant keeper (righteous) or a covenant breaker (rebellious). And each individual is held accountable for the choices that they make.

Genesis 1–2

Genesis 2:16–17  
Romans 5–6

Psalm 8  
 Genesis 1:28  
 Genesis 2:15  
 John 4:23

**Representation** – Man reflects the glory of God in a special sense. God has given man purpose for living and work to do. And man gives back to God worship . . . we are called to give continual thanks to the Lord.

Genesis 1:27–28

Another Scriptural truth that is under attack today is that God created the male and female identities. Men are distinct from women. While there is equality in value, there is also diversity in purpose. Male and female together reflect the image of God. In creating male and female, God also created family and called the 'two to become one.' This is another way in which man is created in the image of God – this reflection of the unity and diversity of the Trinity.

Genesis 2:24

As male and female, humanity is distinguished from the angels. Man is called to relationship, and is able to reproduce.

Genesis 2:18

### MAN IS A CREATURE

Psalm 100:3  
 Genesis 2:7  
 Job 10:12  
 Ecclesiastes 12:6–7  
 Matthew 6:31–33

Though man is in the image of God, man is not God, nor is mankind on the way to becoming 'gods'. Man is distinct from God. God made us . . . not the other way around!

God created man out of the dust of the earth, and man depends upon God for life. We are mortal and must eat, drink, and rest in order to survive. We can never be God because we were created by Him.

### GROWING IN GLORY

2 Corinthians 3:7–18

How can mankind, fallen and sinful as it is, be restored to God's glorious purpose? The answer is in beholding the glory of our Redeemer – the One Who has been provided as a Ransom for our sins . . . Jesus Christ. As we see Him and receive His nature, we are set free from our sinful nature and changed 'from glory to glory.'

In His earthly life, Jesus provided the supreme example of this:

Luke 2:52  
 1 Corinthians 15:47–58

**Wisdom** – intellectually

**Stature** – physically

**Favor with God** – spiritually

**Favor with man** – socially

**From earthly to heavenly** – from a physical body to a spiritual one

### MAN'S FUNCTION

Genesis 1:24–31

A created entity cannot function properly apart from that which it was created to do. We, as God's creation, cannot be at peace nor can we find fulfilment apart from the purpose of our Creator. We need to discover what it is we were created to do. (We will look at Man's Purpose further in the next lesson.) While each individual has a unique, God-given purpose for their lives, there are three basic directions in which we all need to function.

John 4:23; Colossians 1:16  
 Ephesians 2:10  
 Matthew 6:19–34  
 Philippians 2:13  
 Hebrews 13:20–21

Romans 13:9–10  
 Romans 15:1–7  
 Hebrews 10:24–25

Psalm 8  
 Genesis 1:28

First, we must be directed toward God and His will for our lives. Each person owes their very existence to the Lord and we depend upon Him for daily living. God is a gracious and merciful Father, who gives us life and in return receives our worship and our accountability.

Next, we must be directed toward our fellow man. God did not make any individual complete in and of themselves. We were created by Him to be interdependent upon one another. Each person has within them a need for fellowship. Also, we cannot completely fulfill our worship to God apart from other believers. As each person and each gift finds its place and function, then everyone is blessed.

Finally, man must see himself as a steward over nature. We are not the owners of the earth, but we have been given authority by the Creator to rule over it. It is both for our benefit and our care.

### APPLICATION

Can you list three ways in which God's image in man is distorted in popular entertainment? How can we adjust our attitudes about what it means to be human? In the *Humanist Manifesto* of 1933, the following is declared: 'Religious humanists regard the universe as self-existing and not created' (page 8). What does this statement reveal about humanists? Finally, since man is a steward over creation, how are we to approach environmental concerns?

### CONCLUSION

Mankind was created to reflect the image of God. Many people believe they are merely animals, and many people behave as though they were. It is this fallen view of man which helps perpetuate the fallen behavior of man. It is only as we look to God and His purpose that we are able to properly reflect His image. As we behold the Lord, we are transformed from glory to glory by His Spirit. We must never lose sight of the distinction between God the Creator and man the creation. As we relate properly to God, our fellow man, and nature, we can truly reflect God's glory.