

# The Image of God

<sup>26</sup> Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

<sup>27</sup> So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

<sup>28</sup> And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

<sup>29</sup> And God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food.

<sup>30</sup> And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so.

<sup>31</sup> And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

(Gen 1:26-31 ESV).

## Genesis 1:26-31

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### The Divine Council

GOD ASKS JOB, “WHERE WERE YOU when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy?” (Job 38:7). This strange question comes in the context of God laying the foundations, determining the measurements, and sinking the bases of heaven and earth. It refers to a time *before* Genesis 1 when there were intelligent beings surrounding the heavenly throne of God. These beings are given the title “sons of God” and they are likened to the morning stars. As sons, they were created to be part of God’s royal heavenly family. Here, they are described as passive watchers, singing and shouting as their own Father, Creator, and God began to create the physical universe.

Being that they dwell in the heaven that is not material like our “space,” in the place where God himself is said dwell, the Bible describes *their abode* in many places. It describes it as a *court* where they have some kind of *judicial authority*. Earlier, at the very beginning of the book of Job, it tells us about a day when the

sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan (literally “the *satan*”) also came among them (1:6; 2:1). They go into the heavenly court of God and Satan goes to God’s throne to accuse Job.

The prophet Zechariah sees the same thing. He says that he was shown “Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him” (Zech 3:1). The angel of the LORD here is a very important figure who will show up many times in the book of Genesis. In Genesis he is depicted as none other than a second Yahweh (Gen 19:24), or what we Christians would say is Jesus or the Word or the Second Person of the Holy Trinity prior to coming to the earth as a man.

Daniel 7 gives a bit more description of the place. He says that he saw thrones. Again, the idea of ruling is in view. In the middle of these thrones there was a great throne of fiery flames, with wheels of burning fire, and God, whom he calls “the Ancient of Days” took his seat (vs. 9). He also saw a river of fire that issued out from before this throne, and thousands and tens of thousands of the host of heaven stood before him. Then, the other thrones were filled by heavenly beings as the heavenly court took its seat and the books were opened (10). Daniel is describing what Psalm 82:1ff refers to as “the divine council” where the *elohim*, angelic heavenly beings with God as the Head, preside over the affairs of the cosmos (see also Ps 89:5ff).

But then Daniel saw someone “like a son of man” who was presented before the Ancient of Days, and to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all should worship him forever (13-14). Again, more ruling, this time in the context of the word “dominion.” This, too, is who we would call Jesus, only now he is presented as a man rather than an angel, and the NT explains this very story as having been fulfilled in Jesus’ coming to earth as a man.

Ezekiel 1 also describes it. He sees the heavenly throne of God, which he describes as a wheel of fire and gleaming metal (4). From the midst of it came four living creatures, whose appearance was like that of humans (5), except that they had four faces: one like a human, one like a lion, one like an ox, one like an eagle (10).<sup>1</sup> They had human hands (8), but feet like a calf (7), and they sparkled like burnished bronze. Over the heads of the creatures there is a firmament, shining like crystal, spread out above their heads (22). And there was a throne, with the appearance like

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<sup>1</sup> This is a way of describing the four cardinal points of a compass in alignment with the four chief signs of the zodiac (see the sermon on Genesis 49 in vol. 2). In other words, it is a way of depicting the physical universe as the earth is positioned in it, while simultaneously depicting the heavenly beings (“spirits” in vs. 20) that are associated with presiding over their courses in service to Yahweh and their interaction with us humans.

sapphire, and seated on the throne was one like a son of man (26). When John in Revelation sees this same person, he tells us that is it Jesus.

He sees a throne in heaven (Rev 4:1). On the throne is one had the appearance of jasper and carnelian and an emerald rainbow was over the throne. There were 24 elders (4), clothed in white, and these represent the human saints that have died (12 tribes, 12 apostles) and are now become judges. Before the throne was a sea of glass like crystal (6). Around the throne there were four living creatures with eyes in front and behind (6). The living creatures sang a song, just like the sons of God did. They sang, “Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come” (8).

In Isaiah 6, yet another prophet sees the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up in the temple (vs. 1). This is presumably, the heavenly temple, because Isaiah also sees beings with six wings that he calls seraphim (vs. 2), which roughly translates as burning/shining serpents. These seraphim stand above Yahweh’s throne. They too sing, “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts.” They are among the hosts of Yahweh. In Isaiah’s vision, we hear the LORD ask, “Who will go for us?” (vs. 8). The “us” here is the whole heavenly divine council. Who will go on behalf of the council? When Isaiah says that he will go, there is no discussion leading to a decision. This decision has already been made. The seraphs support the decision of the LORD with a chorus of praises for the holiness and glory of God.<sup>2</sup>

This is like when the prophet Micaiah who saw the place said, “I saw the LORD sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing beside him on his right hand and on his left” (1Ki 22:19). Then the prophet overhears a discussion about what to do with the evil king Ahab. He asks who will go and be a lying spirit in the mouth of the prophets. Eventually, a spirit came forward and said, “I will go” (vv. 20-22).<sup>3</sup> The difference with Isaiah is that he gets to go as a human being.

As you can see, this heavenly council is not a minor theme in the Bible, even if very few people actually realize what they are reading about. In fact, it is all over the place. But why would I raise such a thing as we are in the middle of Genesis 1? Well, there are certain depictions here (firmament, seas, stars, etc.) that can help us see that earth is a replica of the temple of heaven. Also, I wanted to introduce them here, because it is important to learn about the council in order to make sense of

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<sup>2</sup> John D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 1–33*, vol. 24, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 73.

<sup>3</sup> Another important reference to at least mention here is when Nebuchadnezzar has Watchers or Holy Ones visit him and explain that by their heavenly decree, he will become a wild animal for seven years. The decree is finalized by God himself (Dan 4:17, 24).

what is being described in Genesis 2 and especially what happens with Satan in Genesis 3.

But there is something that especially helps us understand the climactic creation of Genesis 1, which is the creation of man and woman, male and female, humanity, the image bearer of God. In fact, our story begins by presupposing that the reader is familiar with the heavenly council (as we will see in a moment), even though many people today are in fact not familiar with it at all. When you are familiar with it, suddenly the **true significance and importance** and stunning position given to humans comes into sharp focus in a way that without the council theology in one's mind, a person would hardly be able to understand. In fact, because the theology has been absent, many have failed to grasp a key component of the image of God.

## **Let Us Make Man**

Today we are going to look at the pinnacle of creation: the creation of mankind, one of the most important and foundational portions of God's word. For it is here that we learn who we are, why we are important, what we are to do, why we were created. It is here that the inherent dignity of all human beings has its root. All morality towards other human beings is based here. How we are to treat one another is grounded here.

The story covers **Genesis 1:26-31**. We are told that after God created the beasts of the earth on day six that **he then decided to create us**. Yet, just as soon as we are told this, we enter into a textual difficulty that has seen many interpretations over the centuries. "**The God said, 'Let us make man in our image'**" (1:26). Let "us" make in "our" image. "God said" is singular. But he is speaking to someone. And whomever he is speaking to shares in the image of God in some way.

The question is, who is God speaking to? There have been many answers to over the centuries. Some call it is a **fragment of a myth**, because it so closely resembles other creation stories such as the *Enuma elish* (VI 2-4, 6, 11);<sup>4</sup> the *Atrahasis Epic*,<sup>5</sup> and a Sumerian story with the infamous Annunaki.<sup>6</sup> In all of those myths, the

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<sup>4</sup> 'Marduk's heart prompts him to fashion artful works.

Opening his mouth, he addresses Ea,

To impart the plan he had conceived in his heart . . .

"I will establish a savage, "man" shall be his name" . . .

Ea answered him, speaking a word to him,

To relate to him a scheme for the relief of the gods.'

<sup>5</sup> 'O my son, rise from thy bed, from thy . . . work what is wise,

Fashion *servants* of the gods, may they produce their . . .'

gods are deliberating and speaking to one another. Then they begin creating together. So, the idea would be that someone forgot to stamp out the polytheism. You can tell that is a liberal interpretation. There is no reason to think that Moses is stealing from a myth, even if there are similarities, and there are. Rather, he is telling what they all remembered, but perverted. The true story is that God is the only one “doing” here, even if he might be speaking to someone other than himself.

Post 70 A.D. Jews, who had no other way of dealing with this since they explained away so much of the supernatural in the Bible, including plurality in the Godhead, said that God was simply speaking to creation, particularly to the earth that would bring forth the man. Yet, there is no way that man is made after the image of dirt, even if he literally came from it.<sup>7</sup>

The most popular and one of the oldest Christian interpretations is also foundational, though it is not mutually exclusive to what I will speak about in a moment. I’m talking here about the idea that [God the Father is speaking to other members of the Trinity](#). If a person does not know anything about the divine council, then really, this is the only orthodox option available to them. Who else could God be talking to? He is the only person in the universe that even exists. Therefore, by process of elimination, he has to be speaking to himself. Scholars refer to this as “let us” as something called the “[plural of majesty](#).”

Now, some people disagree with this point, saying that you can’t really even find the Trinity in the OT because it is a NT development.<sup>8</sup> This is nonsense. We have seen the Trinity in the first three verses of Genesis 1, and even the Jewish Targums understood this. When the NT in books like John see Jesus and the Holy Spirit in Genesis 1, they are not making it up on the fly, nor are they hearing invisible voices in their head dictate things that weren’t really there. They were interpreting what was there in a perfect, inspired, infallible way.

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<sup>6</sup> The Annunaki are not space aliens as the whole Ancient Astronaut crowd loves to say, but heavenly beings, the equivalent of the divine council. They ask,  
‘What (else) shall we do?  
What (else) shall we create? . . .  
Let us slay (two) Lamga gods.  
With their blood let us create mankind.  
These are all quoted in [D. J. A. Clines](#), “The Image of God in Man,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 19 (1968): 53-103, esp. 63-64.

<sup>7</sup> *Genesis Rabbah* 8.3: ‘R. Joshua b. Levi said: He took counsel with the works of heaven and earth . . . R. Samuel b. Nahman: With the works of each day.’ See Clines, 64-65.

<sup>8</sup> They will also argue that there are no actual usages of the plural of majesty in verbs and pronouns in the Hebrew. *Elohim* when it refers only to God, with its plural ending, may be an example of the plural of majesty in a noun form.

I believe that the members of the Trinity are also in **Gen 1:26**. I come to this view, not just because I like it, but because I tie it with what we opened with today, and with understanding that the similarities in all the old stories are not accidental. I understand that Christ as the Angel of the LORD in Zechariah, or the one like a son of Man in Daniel, (or the prince of Israel—Michael; Dan 12:1) was a chief member of God’s heavenly council (whether he was then or not, today he is THE chief member, a spot he earned through his obedience as a man), and that whenever he appears in the OT, the Holy Spirit is never far behind. In other words, *the Father is speaking to the Son, but he is also speaking to his other heavenly sons.*

There are many conservative people who take this view, in fact almost all OT scholars do, and they call it the “**plural of exhortation**,” though they often fail to mention Jesus as among those the Father is speaking to. At this point, I want to recall to your memory something we have already heard this morning, because we have actually seen this **plural of exhortation** today. We saw it in Isaiah 6. God said, “**Who will go for us?**” It is the same idea that we have in **Genesis 1:26**. In that case, because of John telling us that Isaiah saw Jesus (**John 12:41**), it seems that the speaker is actually Jesus, and the “us” refers to the seraphim around the throne of God. Curiously, in a teaser for coming weeks, Isaiah is being invited to participate in the affairs of the divine council, which is exactly the privilege Adam will be given in his three-fold office of prophet, priest, and king.

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So the idea then is that God, probably the Father, is speaking to a group of heavenly beings about making man in “our” image. Such an idea seems strange, because it implies that man would then share the image not only with God, but with these other heavenly sons of God. This is both true, and yet as I said about the importance of grasping the divine council, in a unique way it is *not* true. What do I mean it is both true and not true? What we have to do to make sense of this is to grapple with **what it means to be made in God’s image**.

Of course, whole books have been taken up with this daunting question.<sup>9</sup> If I were to ask you, “**What is the image of God?**” how would you answer? First, I

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<sup>9</sup> Some good resources include, **Gordon H. Clark**, “The Image of God in Man,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, (1969) 12:215-222, Fall; **R. G. Crawford**, “Image of God,” *Expository Times*, (1966) 77:233-236, May; **William A. Dyrness**, “The *Imago Dei* and Christian Aesthetics,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, (Summer 1972), 15:161-172; **Charles Lee Feinberg**, “Image of God,” *Bibliotheca Sacra*, (1972) 129:235-246, July–September; **Anthony A Hoekema**, *Created in God’s Image* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986).



think you would realize that it does not mean we are God. An image is a reflection, like a mirror. You are not your reflection. Hopefully, you wouldn't say that this reflection is a physical reflection, as if God has a body like man. Rather, God is a spirit and has no body like man (*Children's Catechism* Q. 9).<sup>10</sup> This is one of the main points behind the Second Commandment. We are not to make images, because God does not have an image, and the only image he has given of himself is the reflection in real, living, breathing human beings (in the NT, Jesus will become that perfect image).

Because we are a reflection of God, I think most of us would probably think about various non-physical **components** within us, **pieces** that make us human beings as opposed to brute animals. You might think (like Augustine and others) of things like reason, morality, volition (even freewill rightly defined), creativity, self-awareness, and other things like these. These are **abilities**, or as philosophers might call them, **properties** of humans. What I want to suggest is that in the capacity that God graciously gifts them to man, these things are absolutely necessary for *carrying out the image of God*. But in and of themselves, they are not the image of God, not any one of them, and not even all of them together.

You see, any good explanation of the image will necessarily begin by understanding the first passage where the image is discussed. This is our passage today. None of those things are in our passage. What does it say about the image? “Then God said, ‘let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth’” (**Gen 1:26**). It then adds that that after God created them (and please note, though God has said “let us make,” in **vs. 27** it is God alone who actually does the creating. “God created man in his own image” is now singular rather than plural), he blessed them and said, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish ... the birds ... and every living thing that moves” (**1:28**). In other words, the image is described here as being related to **dominion**. Or

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J. Maxwell Miller, “In the ‘Image’ and ‘Likeness’ of God,” *Journal of Biblical Literature*, (1972), 91:289-304, September; Norman Henry Snaith, “Image of God,” *Expository Times*, (1974), 86:24, October; D. J. A. Clines, “The Image of God in Man,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 19 (1968): 53-103

<sup>10</sup> In what we will say below, it may be possible that the angelic body, a body which the Word of God (i.e. “The Angel of the LORD”) assumed, it indeed in some ways “like” our body. They are even called “men.” In as much as the image of God is also shared with angels, it is perhaps ok to speak about the image in physical terms, and in as much as the Word of God shared in a heavenly body prior to taking on a human body, there can possibly be some kind of likeness here. Yet still, even angelic bodies, whatever they are like, are only typological of the existence of God (Father, Spirit, or Son even as he alone assumed an angelic body).

to put it another way, **the image of God is a function**. Curiously, this is a word we saw with the one like a son of man in Daniel's heavenly vision. It is also exactly what I have been suggesting is the primary purpose of the Genesis 1 creation account earlier in Genesis 1. It describes function.

What I want you to think about is the image of God as having both a structure and a function. You can even think of it very much like the creation-temple we have been discussing throughout Genesis 1. Creation is a like a building. It has parts or components that make it special (water, sun, air, land, etc.). These things help creation serve the special function of being God's temple. As the Psalm says, "**He built his sanctuary like the high heavens, like the earth, which he has founded forever**" (Ps 78:69).

Man also has a structure and a function. Curiously, in the NT, man is even called God's temple (1 Cor 6:19; 2 Cor 6:16; Eph 2:21; etc.).

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Function

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Structure

Man has been given a structure, a body with various faculties. This structure allows us to carry out our function.

Using the analogy of a **building**, the structure is to the function what the shape and makeup of a building is to its purpose. The structure of an **arena** is that it is round, has seating, restrooms, food courts, and the proper field for the players to play on. This is its structure and it allows for a game to be played, watched, and enjoyed. These things exist so that you might be entertained. Entertainment is the function of the stadium. A **cathedral** may have vaulted ceilings, stain glass windows, a pulpit, a choir loft, pews, acoustics, and other things that induce a more worshipful atmosphere so that the people can come and worship God. Worship is the function of the cathedral. So also, God has given to mankind a will, a mind, the ability to reason and think logically, emotions, a conscience, basic morality, the ability to be relational, the ability to be creative, a marvelous body with dexterity, coordination, muscles, and all things necessary to carry out the image of God. This is the necessary, beautiful, amazing structure that supports the functional aspect of the image of God.



This function of mankind is dominion. Now, we share the idea of dominion with the angels, and so basically, all of the pieces of what it means to be an image bearer are shared with them. Yet, there is something that we do not share with them. This is dominion *over the earth*. They were not given dominion down here, and frankly, I think this is the chief motivation for the temptation. Satan was mad about this. He wanted to be given this special privilege, but God gave it to us. God created us to have dominion, not a host of gods. Satan didn't have a say in the matter (**we will come back to all of this in Genesis 3**).

At any rate, perhaps you have not thought about the image of God as a function, and this thought is strange to you? So what I want to do now is first look at why these properties alone cannot be the image, and then second, look at the context of where this idea of the image of God comes from, because it explains this central idea of the image. First, why can't reason, volition, a body, a soul, or other components by themselves be the image of God?

There are several reasons. The first is that the animal kingdom shares most if not all of these components with us and they are not made in God's image. Think about things like intelligence. Animals have intelligence, some have very high intelligence. Not as high as ours, but they still have intelligence. Or emotions. Animals definitely have emotions, some more than others. What about communication? Animals communicate with each other. Or how about a will? Animals have wills, and often even do things of what we might call freewill, that is, they do what they want to do, not what you want them to do. What about community? Many animals live in communities and need each other. Maybe a soul is what makes us unique? But even this the animals are said to possess. It is called the *nepesh* in the Hebrew, the breath of life, the soul. The "living creatures" in **1:20, 21, 24** are literally, "living souls." In fact, man is called the exact same thing in **Gen 2:7** (*nepesh hayya*).

Now, of course, they don't share these things to the degree that most people have them, and I say "most" on purpose. Mankind on the whole has been endowed with faculties that are on a much higher level. We have what they call "higher intelligence." We can be self-aware and reflect upon that. We can deliberately choose to talk to God. I want to make two points about this.

First, we are not the only beings in the universe that have even these abilities. For we share these things with the heavenly host, including even beings that are not on the divine council, such as demons. About the only thing that they do not have

are human bodies, though even here some of them seem to be able to emulate our bodies, even if they cannot assume our nature.

Another very great difficulty here is that **some humans do not possess some of these things**. Some are born with *severe* handicaps. Also, at one time or another, none of us had them, though we were still alive and to be considered human beings. That is, when we were each single celled organisms in our mother's wombs, we did not possess self-awareness, reason, emotions, and so on. We did possess life and a soul, but the idea is that if anyone or group of these things is what it means to be made in God's image, then it seems that if you don't possess them, that you are not in God's image. In other words, to define the image purely in terms like faculties, it is a very easy step to denying that zygotes and embryos are image bearers, and to be an image bearer is to be a human. In other words, it is no help at all to the question of abortion, which is an innate moral outrage, because we these unborn babies are image bearers.

As Dr. Heiser points out, **“the image has not been and cannot be bestowed incrementally or partially. You're either created as God's image bearer or you aren't. One cannot speak of being ‘partly’ created in God's image or ‘potentially’ bearing the image.”**<sup>11</sup> It is for this reason that when we think about the image, we have to go further. Even a single celled human being must possess the image of God at the moment of conception. This is the biblical teaching and you can see how important it is to many ethical issues today.

Now, a function is not really a thing that is “in” a person. Most translations say that we are made “in God's image.” But the question is, what does “in” mean? For example, I can say, “put the dishes *in* the sink.” I am using the preposition to denote *location*. The image would be inside of me. Or I say, “I broke the mirror *in* pieces.” Now I am using “in” to denote the *result* of some action or accident. If I say, “I work *in* the pastorate,” I am using the preposition to denote that I work *as* a pastor.

Thinking about it this way we can say that man was created *as* the image of God, that is, **humans function as image bearers**. This is what we are designed to do. In its most basic form, even dominion is not what it means to be an image bearer. **The core of the idea of being made in God's image is that we are his representatives to the physical creation.** *This* is the image of God. Physical properties and immaterial parts and dominion and having babies and all the rest help us to represent him properly. One person has called it being God's **vice-gerents** (as distinct from a

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<sup>11</sup> Michael Heiser, *The Myth that is True*, unpublished.

vice-regent). A vice gerent is someone appointed to act in the place of a ruler. A vice-regent is someone who is a deputy or assistant to the ruler.

All of us have this basic design in our DNA. Each of us have been directly blessed by God to this end. There is no one conceived or born of a man and woman who can say, “God didn’t create me to function as his image bearer.” All can say, “I am God’s vice gerent.” So how do we carry out this function?

We do it using the faculties God has given to us as man, and we do it primarily through **three basic offices**, the original offices given to Adam and taken up by Christ when he became a man. We do it through the offices of **prophet**, **priest**, and **king**. Taking these three offices together, we can make sense of the three most basic passages surrounding the image of God. The first is the one here with dominion. Throughout the Scripture, dominion belongs to kings (**1 Kgs 4:24**; **Ps 145:13**; **Jer 34:1**; **Dan 4:3**; **7:14**; etc.). The one like a son of man was given dominion because he would be king, and Jesus became the king of the Jews.

You can see in **vs. 28** how God says, “**rule**.” Obviously, this is a feature of kings. The only other thing in the entire chapter that has anything close to this is the sun, moon, and stars (which are linked to the *elohim*-angels). The word is different (*mashal* vs. *radah*), but the idea is similar. Since the sun and moon as physical objects in a physical universe can’t rule *as men do*, it is clear that mankind is given a function that is above even the heavenly lights (think about my comments earlier about Satan).

To further help carry out this function, God gives his blessing and commands us to **be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth**. God gave the same blessing to the birds and the fish (**Gen 1:22**). The important thing here is not that God blesses us with children, but that it is us and our children (all of humanity together) that carry out the ruling dominion. In other words, there is a sense in which we are all kings, not just a select few that are given that title by birth or take it by force. (Think about the political implications of this under tyrannical dictators and Emperors who dehumanize through law or murder for power, etc. Such tyranny is fundamental denial of the image of God).

The last thing God tells us to do in carrying out the image in Genesis 1 is to **subdue** the earth. The point of the passage (which is before the fall) is that God has put all things under our feet in order to fulfill this function. Not only do we rule the animals, but God gives us all the plants as food (**Gen 1:29**), which he has also given to the animals (**30**), so that we can thrive and carry out the image. If God did not give us food, we wouldn’t be doing anything for very long.

After the fall, the idea of subduing the earth has been greatly perverted. Rather than manage, we manipulate. Rather than govern, we become tyrants. Rather than cultivate, we obliterate. Rather than tend, we tear down and destroy. Our representation of God has become a mockery of fools. God originally gave to Adam the capacity, therefore, to subdue the earth without sin. For this, he gave the offices of priest and prophet.

Being a priest taught Adam, and gave him the ability, to subdue the earth in holiness. It taught him the sacredness of all creation, not in a way that he would worship the creation, but that he would treat it as a holy place, as a priest treats the objects of the temple and the temple itself. Ephesians 4:24 commands us to “Put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.” You see that this is a commentary on our passage from the word “likeness.” We were created in God’s image and likeness. Holiness and righteousness were the states we were created in which gave us the capacity to have dominion in a way that reflects God’s own dominion. It is not a coincidence that Ephesians had to first develop the idea of the church as God’s temple (Eph 2:19-22; 4:13; cf. Barn 16:6-10) before it then tells us about living properly by putting on the new self.

The other thing we have been given is knowledge. Colossians 3:10 says, “Put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.” Knowledge of God is a function of the office of a prophet. Prophets tell other about God, about his laws, about his attributes, about his character, about his commands. Adam was given original knowledge about God so that he might be a prophet to the creation, ruling according to the knowledge of God, teaching his children about the same God.

## The Image of God as Christ

But something terrible happened. Man, at the instigation of Satan, plunged the world into sin, bringing death and destruction upon himself and his posterity. Psalm 8 helps us understand that the heavenly beings and earthly beings share in a kind of dance, where they were given dominion over the heavenly realms, and we were given dominion down here.

In Psalm 8, God’s glory is above the heavens (vs. 1), a way of saying that his reign and rule is above both ours and theirs. He is alone sovereign. Out of the mouths of babies and infants, he stills the avenger (2). Then, David the king looks at the heavens, the work of God’s fingers, the moon and the stars, which he set in place (3). The moon and the stars, that is important. Then he wonders, “What is man that

you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you are for him” (4). Satan probably asked the same question of this lump of dust and mud, but it brought about in his heart rage rather than worship.

Then comes the key verse, “You have made him a little lower than the *elohim*,” or in the book of Hebrews and the LXX—“the angels” (5). What a strange thing to say? Not really, if you understand the themes we are talking about this morning. Yet, though created lower than them, God crowned man with glory and honor. He gave him dominion over the works of his hands and has “put all things under his feet” (6). Dominion. Do you hear how this is a reflection on the image of God? Psalm 8 is a commentary on our passage today.

The problem is, after the fall, no one carries out the image in holiness, righteousness, or true knowledge. At least, not until Christ comes. But Christ becomes the key to the whole thing. In fact, I believe that if you look at Genesis 1:26-28 without thinking about Christ, you have misinterpreted the Scripture at the critical point. For his coming was in mind even when God made man. The plan all along was that Christ might have dominion in heaven (as the angel) and on earth (as a man) so that to him might be given all things both in heaven and on earth. Hebrews 2 is the inspired commentary on Psalm 8. It applies the Psalm to Jesus.

Many places in the NT tell us that Christ is the perfect image of the Father. Hebrews begins by asserting that he is the “exact representation” of his being (Heb 1:3). Colossians says that, “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation” (Col 1:15). 2 Corinthians talks about “the glory of Christ, who is the image of God” (2 Cor 4:4). Jesus told us that to see him was to see the Father (John 14:9). Jesus was the perfect Prophet, Priest, and King. He always spoke the truth, also glorified God in holiness, always rules in power, is full of all wisdom and knowledge.

Most of these passages have glory in mind in some way, even as Psalm 8 does. Glory is closely linked to worship, as the word *doxa* is where we get *doxology*. But listen to how it is linked to the image. “You have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. You have given him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet” (Ps 8:5-6). Again, talking about angels Hebrews says, “It was not to angels that God subjected the world to come, of which we are speaking” (Heb 2:5). No, this was given to man. But it says the world to come it put under our subjection, because of Christ, for “in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside of his control” (8). Christ is the key.

It concludes, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him. He has not yet put Satan under his feet, though he has crushed his head. This is so God might bring many earthly sons **to glory** through Jesus Christ. Apart from Christ, you may be an imager, an image bearer, but only in Christ can you carry out your function with your faculties in a God honoring and glorifying way. Apart from Christ, your image is broken like a shattered mirror. Apart from Christ, you make yourself look like a fool to the creation. Apart from Christ you are a destroyer, a mocker, a false worshiper, an idolater. You do not rule well, you are not holy, and you do not speak truth.

This is why the two passages tell you to “**put on**” the new self. You put on the new self by putting on Christ, by trusting in him alone for your justification, your sanctification, and your glorification. He alone creates life. He is the clothing we are to put on. We put on Christ. When you trust in Christ, you continue putting him on each day anew, and you begin to see how you are being created anew after the image of Christ in holiness, righteousness, and knowledge. Your faculties are not brought into submission to carry out the image. You look at the earth in new ways, so that you can carry out dominion. And you begin to represent God as the image of God because Christ is in you. And when you fail, you always point back to him, the perfect image of God.

Those apart from Christ cannot do this. All they do leads to ruin and destruction and mockery and corruption. All they touch turns to ashes. And on the great and dreadful day of the Lord, they will perish along with their works. But how glorious that God should still care for man, that he might bring him glory and honor when he turns to the Son, the Creator of all things in repentance and faith.