

What is Man?

Lesson 2

The Image of God

Lesson Guide



thirdmill

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Biblical Education. For the World. For Free.

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HOW TO USE THIS LESSON GUIDE

This lesson guide is designed for use in conjunction with the associated video. If you do not have access to the video, the lesson guide will also work with the audio and/or manuscript versions of the lesson. Additionally, the video and lesson guide are intended to be used in a learning community, but they also can be used for individual study if necessary.

- **Before you watch the lesson**
 - **Prepare** — Complete any recommended readings.
 - **Schedule viewing** — The Notes section of the lesson guide has been divided into segments that correspond to the video. Using the time codes found in parentheses beside each major division, determine where to begin and end your viewing session. IIM lessons are densely packed with information, so you may also want to schedule breaks. Breaks should be scheduled at major divisions.
- **While you are watching the lesson**
 - **Take notes** — The Notes section of the lesson guide contains a basic outline of the lesson, including the time codes for the beginning of each segment and key notes to guide you through the information. Many of the main ideas are already summarized, but make sure to supplement these with your own notes. You should also add supporting details that will help you to remember, describe, and defend the main ideas.
 - **Record comments and questions** — As you watch the video, you may have comments and/or questions on what you are learning. Use the margins to record your comments and questions so that you can share these with the group following the viewing session.
 - **Pause/replay portions of the lesson** — You may find it helpful to pause or replay the video at certain points in order to write additional notes, review difficult concepts, or discuss points of interest.
- **After you watch the lesson**
 - **Complete Review Questions** — Review Questions are based on the basic content of the lesson. You should answer Review Questions in the space provided. These questions should be completed individually rather than in a group.
 - **Answer/discuss Application Questions** — Application Questions are questions relating the content of the lesson to Christian living, theology, and ministry. Application questions are appropriate for written assignments or as topics for group discussions. For written assignments, it is recommended that answers not exceed one page in length.

Notes

I. Introduction (0:20)

Human beings are created as God's likenesses (Genesis 1:27).

II. Office (2:07)

God appointed human beings to rule over his creation on his behalf (Genesis 1:27-28).

We are God's vice-regents — his administrative deputies or his servant or vassal kings.

A. Images of False Gods (3:43)

1. Idols (4:00)

When an idol was crafted, it was thought that the god it represented spiritually inhabited or indwelt the idol.

Idols were representatives of, and even substitutes for, the gods themselves.

The prophets criticized the worship of idols:

- Habakkuk 2:18-19 – idols are lifeless; there is no divine presence within them.
- Isaiah 44:13-20 – idolaters craft idols from the same wood used to build a fire and cook their food.

Scripture teaches that some false gods are actually demons (Deuteronomy 32:17; Psalm 106:37; 1 Corinthians 10:20).

2. **Kings (9:07)**

In many ancient Near Eastern cultures, kings were called “images” of the gods they served:

- Egypt – pharaohs were referred to as the images of various gods.
- Mesopotamia – kings were referred to as an image of a god, including the gods Shamash and Marduk.

Moses’ audience might easily have assumed that “image of God” referred to the office of king.

B. **Images of the True God (12:53)**

The first thing Scripture says about humanity is that we’re the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:26).

1. **Vocabulary (14:33)**

“Image” – (Hebrew: *tselem*) a carved idol, a model, reflection or shadow.

“Likeness” – (Hebrew: *děmuth*) a statue, a sketch, the appearance or sound of something compared to another; having a similar form.

“Image” and “likeness” both describe a model or sketch of a greater reality.

Scripture affirms that God alone is God (Romans 3:30; 1 Corinthians 8:6; James 2:19).

We’re God’s images and likenesses because we rule over the earth as God’s servant kings and are endowed with the necessary qualities and abilities to perform our duties.

2. **Jesus (20:17)**

Two aspects Paul used to highlight Jesus as the perfect image of God (2 Corinthians 4:4-5):

- Jesus’ divine glory

In Christ, every attribute of God is present and manifested (Colossians 2:9; Hebrews 1:3; John 14:9).

- Jesus' office of Lord or King

Jesus perfectly exercises God's rule over creation (Colossians 1:13-18).

As God's perfect image, Jesus has supremacy in every area:

- king of his own kingdom
- firstborn over creation
- creator of all other authorities
- head or ruler of the church
- first resurrected and glorified human being

We are images of God: we rule on his behalf, carry out his will, and reflect his glory (1 Corinthians 11:7).

3. Authority (27:21)

As God's images, we are given authority over the earth.

All human beings are God's vice-regents, or servant kings, whose task is to make sure that his will is done on earth.

Aspects of our authority (Genesis 1:27-28):

- fill the earth with God's images
- govern all earth's creatures
- subdue the earth

Our role or office as images of God elevates all humanity to the level of royalty.

We hold authority only because God grants it to us.

Our reign over the earth is always subservient to the will of God.

III. Attributes (33:19)

A. Moral (34:16)

Refers to our ability to distinguish between:

- right/good – concepts, behaviors and emotions that God approves and blesses
- and
- wrong/evil – concepts, behaviors and emotions that he prohibits and punishes

Our moral judgment was damaged by humanity's fall into sin but not completely destroyed.

When God placed humanity in the Garden of Eden, they recognized their moral obligations.

Adam and Eve gained knowledge after they ate the forbidden fruit, but Scripture doesn't describe this in terms of moral judgment.

Because our minds and consciences are corrupted:

- We can't properly evaluate good and evil (Titus 1:15).
- We can't act in moral ways (Titus 1:16; Romans 8:7-8).

Scripture still refers to sinful humanity as God's images and likenesses (Genesis 9:6; James 3:9).

When we come to faith in Christ, God begins to renew and restore the moral aspect of his image in us (Ephesians 4:24).

B. Rational (42:23)

The image of God in human beings includes our capacity to think rationally and process complex emotions.

Some of this rational ability was lost in our fall into sin (Ecclesiastes 9:3; Jeremiah 19:9; Deuteronomy 29:2-3; John 8:43-47; Ephesians 4:17-18).

The Fall damaged our ability to think and to understand the world from God's perspective, but it didn't destroy it completely:

- Even unbelievers have the rational capacity to know that God exists and to recognize certain aspects of his invisible qualities and divine nature (Romans 1:19-20).
- God has given believers his Holy Spirit and the mind of Christ so that we can once again understand reality in the same way that God does (1 Corinthians 2:11-16; Colossians 3:10).

C. Spiritual (48:43)

God is a Spirit – he exists beyond or above the natural realm, in the supernatural realm, where he doesn't have a physical body (John 4:24).

Our immortal spiritual existence is another attribute that God shares with us.

God's creation of Adam distinguishes humanity from the other creatures:

- Only Adam is reported to have received his soul by God directly breathing it into him (Genesis 2:7).
- Only human beings are said to have a spiritual existence after our bodies die (John 5:28-29; Revelation 10:11–21:5).

IV. Relationships (52:15)

When God appointed humanity to the office of his image, he created a variety of relationships.

A. God (52:57)

God's covenant relationship with humanity resembled ancient Near Eastern suzerain-vassal treaties.

Features common in ancient Near Eastern treaties:

- the suzerain's benevolence toward his vassal
- the loyalty the suzerain required of his vassal
- the consequences that would result from the vassal's loyalty or disloyalty
- covenant continued throughout the generations

1. Reflect God's Character (54:09)

Images of God are intended to reflect his character (pure, holy and righteous) wherever they appear (1 Peter 1:15-16; Hebrews 12:14).

Fallen human beings can't be utterly holy on our own merit, but we rely on Christ's perfect holiness for our standing before God.

God still requires us to pursue holiness (e.g., keeping his commandments).

By God's grace, we are becoming clearer images of him as we pursue holiness and righteousness (2 Corinthians 3:18).

2. Promote Pure Worship (58:36)

Because human beings are the real images of God, idols and other non-human representations of him are false images.

Moses reminded his audience that God hadn't revealed himself in a physical form because he wanted to protect the purity of their worship.

God is the true God and isn't to be treated like the false gods of the nations (Deuteronomy 4:15-16).

3. Build God's Kingdom (1:00:54)

God commanded humanity to "fill the earth," instructing us to place images of himself throughout the world (Genesis 1:28).

As God's vice-regents or servant kings, we carry his rule with us wherever we go.

All human beings are born into Satan's enemy kingdom until we come to faith in Christ (Ephesians 2:1-2).

B. Human Beings (1:02:55)

1. Dignity (1:03:03)

Every human being bears God's image sufficiently to be treated with dignity and respect.

To mistreat God's representative is to insult God himself.

2. **Justice (1:07:26)**

Scripture commands that we uphold justice for all images of God (Genesis 9:6; James 3:9).

Our role as God's servant kings obligates us to preserve justice.

Examples:

- Solomon (2 Chronicles 9:8)

- Jesus (Isaiah 42:1-4)

C. **Creation (1:09:54)**

As God's images, human beings are to fill and subdue the earth and to rule over its creatures (Genesis 1:27-28, "cultural mandate").

God expected human beings to:

- turn the world into God's garden sanctuary.

- rule over all the animals rightly:
 - domesticated animals – Exodus 20:10; Deuteronomy 22:10; 25:4

 - wild animals – Exodus 23:11; Deuteronomy 22:6-7

As God's representatives on earth, we are to carry out our role in ways that accomplish his purposes, benefit his creation and creatures, and bring him glory.

V. Conclusion (1:15:09)

9. Explain what is meant by the “cultural mandate” in Genesis 1:28. What responsibilities did God give human beings, and what does this teach us about how we are to treat the earth and its creatures?

Application Questions

1. What can we learn about ourselves from the fact that we've been created in God's image?
2. God allowed Adam and Eve to participate in the work he began at creation. What does this suggest about the significance of our vocations, as well as our roles within our families and society?
3. What idols can you identify in your surrounding culture? Which of these do you also see in your own life?
4. In John 14:9, Jesus said, "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father." How does your knowledge of Jesus as the perfect image of God help you better understand who God is?
5. What does it mean to you personally that God has appointed you as a vice-regent to rule over creation on his behalf? How does this influence the way you minister to others?
6. Give some specific examples of ways that God has begun to renew and restore your moral and rational abilities since you came to faith in Christ. How can you use your experience to help those around you grow as believers?
7. It is an enormous task to reflect God's character. How does God's law guide us in this task? How can we reflect God's character even after we break God's law?
8. We are called to promote dignity and justice for all human beings. What does this teach you about the way you should treat those around you who are unbelievers?
9. Subduing the earth may look a bit different today than it did for Adam and Eve. How are you fulfilling the cultural mandate in your own life and time?
10. What is the most significant thing you learned in this lesson?

Glossary

Adad-shumu-usur – (ca. 740-665 B.C.) Assyrian scholar and royal court astrologer-priest who wrote fifty-six letters or reports (extant) to the king of Assyria

cultural mandate – The command in Genesis 1:28 instructing humanity to develop and rule the creation to display God's glory

děmuth – Hebrew term (transliteration) meaning “likeness”

idol – Image or item, often hand-made, that represented or even substituted for a god

moral judgment – The ability to distinguish between right and good and evil and wrong

suzerain – A powerful emperor or king that ruled over smaller nations; the more powerful party of a covenant, the one to whom it was necessary to submit

suzerain-vassal treaty – A covenant arrangement made between a conquering emperor and a lesser ruler

tselem – Hebrew term (transliteration) meaning “image”

vassal – A king or nation that must submit to a more powerful emperor or king (suzerain)

vice-regent – A person who acts in place of a regent or other ruler

Westminster Larger Catechism – A traditional Protestant summary of Christian teaching, originally published in 1647, more comprehensive than the Shorter Catechism

Westminster Shorter Catechism – A traditional Protestant summary of Christian teaching, originally published in 1647