**Lesson: Imagine That**

 God created humankind in His own image. There are no other creatures on this planet which can claim that. Actually, we are like God in many ways, though many will wrongly ascribe human attributes to God. Like God, we exist spiritually, mentally, and physically. One might argue that animals do too, but their mental capabilities are markedly inferior to humans. Other earthly creatures operate by instinct; that’s all they can think about They have no capacity to reason, make moral choices, analyze complex problems, imagine, conceptualize, and all other forms of higher-order thinking. That is, they do not possess a soul and are therefore, not condemned creatures since they do not sin. Of course, animals can be taught things that are unnatural thanks to sinful people.

* GEN 1:26–27 ~ God said, “Let us make humans in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the fowl of the air, over the cattle, and over all the earth and everything that creeps upon the earth.” So, God created humankind in His own image; in the image of God He created us all, males and females alike.
* GEN 9:6 ~ Whoever sheds the blood of another human being will have their blood shed as well; for everyone was made in the image of God.

Jesus Christ is the image of God. He has been with God since the beginning (ISA 48:16; JOH 1:1–14), in other words, forever. Christ came to earth in human form so we could know Him. Thus, God can be seen in Christ, as well as in the rest of His creation (ROM 1:20). And the Holy Spirit can be found in God’s Word (ZEC 7:12; JOH 16:12–13; 2 PE 1:20–21), and in Jesus Christ (LUK 1:26–35). Can you imagine the Holy Trinity? If you can, you will understand Christianity; this is a mystery resolved only through faith.

* 2 CO 4:2–4 ~ We have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not engaging in trickery, nor presenting the word of God deceitfully; but through truthfulness we consign ourselves to everybody’s conscience in the sight of God. For if our gospel is hidden it is concealed from those who are lost; in whom the god of this world has blinded their disbelieving minds to obscure the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, from shining upon them.
* COL 1:12–20 ~ Give thanks to the Father, who has allowed us to partake of His inheritance, given to the saints who abide in His light. He has ransomed us from the power of darkness and delivered us to the kingdom of His dear Son Jesus Christ, who has redeemed us and forgiven us through His own precious blood. Christ is the very image of the invisible God; He is the firstborn of all living creatures. Through Him, all things were created on earth and in heaven, whether visible or invisible, including all thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers. All things were created by Him and for Him. He is before all things, and because of Him all things exist. He is the head of the body, which is the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn of the dead, and the Supreme Being above all things. God was pleased to allow His fullness to live in Christ. Christ established an everlasting peace through His blood which was shed on the cross, thereby causing all things on earth and in heaven to exist together in harmony with Him.
* HEB 1:1–2 ~ God, who spoke throughout history to the prophets, has in these past days spoken to us by His Son Jesus Christ, whom He appointed heir of all things and by whom He also made the worlds. Who, being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power when He had by Himself purged our sins, He sat down at the right hand of His Majesty in heaven.

Jesus came to us to reveal God, to fulfill His words, and to testify to the truth conveyed to us by the Holy Spirit. He was God incarnate, the image of man; who was seen, heard, felt, and experienced even to this day by those who seek Him and bear witness to His sacrifice, His resurrection, and His glory.

* ROM 8:1–3 ~ Those who are in Christ are no longer condemned, because through Him, the law of the Spirit of life sets us free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weakened because of our sinful flesh, God sent His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be an offering for sin, thereby condemning the sinfulness of humanity.
* PHP 2:5–11 ~ Keep your thoughts on Jesus Christ who, although He was God in the flesh, did not glorify Himself but became a servant. In the form of a man He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even death on a cross. Therefore, God has exalted Him and given Him a name above all other names. Everyone should bow at the name of Jesus Christ, whether they are in heaven or on earth. Every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

When we receive Christ, we become conformed into His image. Through the process of sanctification, believers become more like Him, and are able to think and do as He would, with a moral compass that always points towards true north (ROM 9:1; 1 CO 2:16; 1 TI 1:5), that is, heavenward where God the Father awaits our arrival (GAL 4:4–7; EPH 1:3–7).

* PSA17:15 ~ As for me, I will behold His face in righteousness. When I awaken, I will be delighted to see His likeness.
* ROM 6:3–5 ~ Don’t you know that anyone who is baptized into Jesus Christ has been baptized unto death? Therefore, we who were baptized will be buried with Him, and as He was raised from the dead, so also we will receive a new life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, we likewise will be united together in the likeness of His resurrection.
* ROM 8:28–31 ~ We know that all things work together for good to those who love God and are called according to His purpose. For God knew them in advance and predestined them to be conformed into the image of His Son, and to be among the firstborn of His brothers. Whomever He predestined, He called; and whomever He called He justified; and whomever He justified, He also glorified. Therefore, if God is with us, who can be against us?
* 1 CO 15:49 ~ As we have borne the image of the earthy, we also will bear the image of the heavenly.
* 2 CO 3:18 ~ We, who with faces beaming reflect as a mirror the glory of the Lord, will be changed into that same image with continuous glory by the Spirit of the Lord.
* COL 3:10 ~ We have put on the new self, which is renewed in knowledge in the likeness of our Creator.

Given the wondrous things the Lord has done for humanity, is it not odd that people would worship any other? Time and again God warned Israel about the idolatry of their pagan neighbors, who would invent their own gods, create images of them, and even worship them. What is even more outrageous is that God’s people Israel disobeyed this commandment and worshipped graven images right along with them. Actually, anyone worshipping anything or anyone other than God are idolators. But then, who has never been guilty of idolatry? Precisely, that’s why we need a Savior and the reason we worship Him.

* EXO 20:4; LEV 26:1 ~ You must not fashion any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth, or that is in the water. You must not set up any image of stone and bow down to it, for I alone am God.
* HAB 2:18 ~ What does it profit those who fashion images, and teach lies, and trust in the work of their own hands in the producing of dumb idols?
* ROM 1:18–25 ~ The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against the wickedness of men, who suppress the truth through unrighteousness, though the things that are known about God are clear to them because God has made these things clear. Since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities have been obvious, including His eternal power and His divine nature. Therefore, they have no excuse; because, while they knew God, they neither glorified Him nor gave thanks to Him. Their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Though they claimed to be wise, they were foolish, exchanging the glory of God for graven images. God allowed them to become depraved, who turned God’s truth into a lie and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator who is blessed forever.

In the end times, once again humanity will become idolatrous, and engage in the worshipping of idols. This is one of Satan’s great deceptions. In fact, all worship that is not given to God is lost, as will be the idolators, for their adulation goes to the lake of fire along with Satan. Strangely enough, Satan will present himself as a messiah, and he will have an idol fashioned in his image; many will follow him, worship him, and be condemned with him.

* REV 13:11–15 ~ A beast came out of the earth and this beast had the authority of Satan. And he deceived people into worshipping the beast by performing miraculous feats. The beast ordered the people to construct an image of the beast, who was wounded and yet lived. He was able to invigorate the image of the beast, so that the image could speak. Everyone was expected to worship the image of the beast; the penalty for not worshipping it was execution.
* REV 14:9–11 ~ Those who worship the beast and his image, and those who receive the mark of the beast on their hand or forehead, will receive God’s wrath. They will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the Lamb and His holy angels. The smoke from that torment will ascend from hell forever; and they will have no rest day and night.
* REV 16:2 ~ And the first angel poured out his vial upon the earth; and offensive and painful sores came upon whose who had the mark of the beast, and upon those who worshipped his image.
* REV 19:20; REV 20:10 ~ The beast (antichrist) was taken, and with him the false prophet that had performed miracles before him and through which he had deceived those who had received the mark of the beast. Also taken were those who worshipped the image of the beast; they all were thrown alive into the lake of fire. Then Satan was thrown into the lake of fire along with them.

Satan, the fallen cherub, who dragged a third of the angels of heaven down with him, has been dragging human beings by the millions down with them. God created angels to minister to Him and to perform tasks assigned to them. Apparently, a great many of them left the employ of God and chose to join Satan in his mutiny. They are lost and they are damned, for they are irredeemable. By the way, angels were not created in the image of God and do not inherit the kingdom as an adopted child of God. And though they are greater than humans in power and stature, at the resurrection God’s chosen will gain a place higher than the angels.

* 1 CO 6:3 ~ Do you not know that you will be judging angels? How much more should we judge the things of this life!
* HEB 1:3–6 ~ Christ is the radiance of God’s glory, and the exact image of His being, sustaining all things by His powerful Word. After He had provided purification from our sins, He sat down at the right hand of His Majesty in heaven. Therefore, He is superior to the angels, and His name is above all names. Did God ever say to an angel, “You are my son, today I have begotten you?” Or did He ever say, “I will be his Father and he will be my son?” Further, when God brought forth His firstborn He said, “Let all the angels worship Him.”
* 2 PE 2:4; JDE 1:6 ~ God did not spare the angels who sinned and abandoned God but sent them into hell, where they are held in chains and darkness to await the judgment.

Appearances can be deceiving. Make sure you are not misled by false teachers and fake prophets. Especially, be ready and watchful, for the end times are coming and may already be upon us. There will be no more messiahs so do not follow anyone claiming to be Christ, pretending to be a prophet, or performing miracles, signs, and wonders to gain converts. They are working for Satan, just like the demons that he persuaded to follow him and forsake God. When the true Messiah returns, time is up; there will be no further chance at redemption, after which fallen angels and humans will end up in the same dreadful place.

* 2 CO 5:12 ~ We are not commending ourselves again to you, but giving you an opportunity to be prideful on our behalf, so you also can answer those who take pride in appearance but not in heart.
* 2 CO 10:7 ~ Do you examine things according to the outward appearance? If anyone claims to be in Christ, let them remember that we also claim Christ and belong to Him.

Do you imagine yourself living eternally in heaven or dying eternally in hell? Or are you among those who believe in neither heaven nor hell? Be advised, only one of these three groups are associated with the living.

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