



Genesis 1:26–28 (ESV)

<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.”

## Where Did We Go Wrong?

I did a Google search on the word “image.” I found two hair salons in the area that use the word in their name. One construction company also uses the word in its name. I found an article on “image recognition software.” There was a section of definitions: “Image: An image is a visual representation of something.” And, there’s even a mathematical definition of “image.” I didn’t know that. And, I’m not sure I understand what it is.

When the Bible says that human beings were created in “God’s image” what does that mean? In nature, a person can see their own image reflected on the surface of still waters. That understanding of image is familiar to us and was also familiar to the people in Bible times. Could we be created to reflect God’s image, in the way that a still surface of water can reflect our image? Let’s stick with that idea.

Now consider that when Adam and Eve sinned, they failed to reflect God’s image. God created them to bear His image, but they didn’t do it. Neither did their descendants, who were created by God to bear His image. Why? Because when a person doesn’t worship God, that person ceases to bear the image of God as God intended. They can’t reflect God’s image if they have no relationship with God.

Perhaps deep in our hearts we have a need to bear the image of God, but we can’t do it because that part of us is broken. What do human beings do with that deep longing in their hearts? They pursue and worship false gods. In ancient times they made idols of stone, metal, and wood. In modern times they may pursue pleasures, making themselves to be like God. Or, they spend all their time and energy chasing after dreams of fame and fortune, seeking to be adored, and worshipped, by other people. All of these things are different forms of idolatry, pursuing and worshipping a false god. The tricky thing about adoration is that human beings become obsessed with what they adore. They come to resemble the object of their adoration. They come to bear its image. This is true when people worship false gods, as well as when people worship the true God. When people worship a false God, they bear its image and become like the false god. When those who believe in Jesus worship God, because Jesus has made them new they can bear God’s image.

People become like what they worship. That is how worship changes us. Where did humanity go wrong? They failed to reflect the image of God, as God had created them to do.

This week we will study:

- Adam and Eve failed to bear the image of God
- Worship causes people to bear the image of what they worship
- Jesus makes believers new; so, they can bear the image of God

## Adam and Eve Failed to Bear the Image of God

Let's see how human beings became unable to reflect the image of God. Afterall, God created humans in His image, to reflect the reality of His presence with them. We will see what went wrong.

We will look at a familiar passage of scripture.

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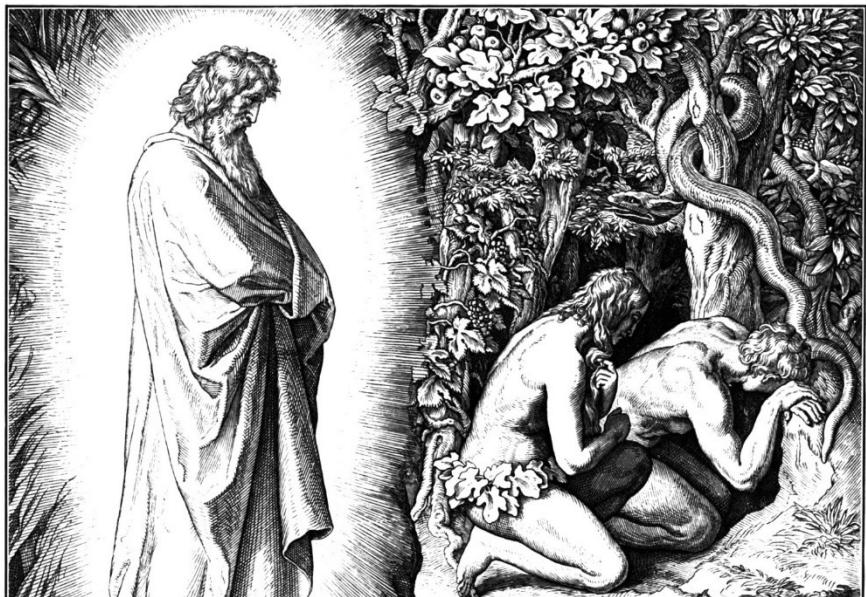
<sup>28</sup> And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

God gave Adam and Eve a command to “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it” (Genesis 1:28), to bring the earth under God’s full authority through them. God’s plan was that their descendants, who reflected the image of God, would fill the earth. Because they bore the image of God, the presence, and glory of God, would have filled the earth.

When Adam and Eve sinned, they didn’t fulfill God’s plan. Instead of trusting God, they trusted the serpent. Instead of driving the invading serpent out of Eden, they welcomed him. Instead of ruling over the serpent, they allowed the serpent to rule over them. Instead of bringing the glory of God’s presence throughout the earth, they were cast out of God’s presence, and could no longer bear God’s image. They couldn’t bear God’s image because they were no longer in fellowship with God.

God told Adam and Eve what would happen (Genesis 2:16&17), but they didn’t believe God. Instead, they took the word of the serpent, and trusted the serpent’s words over the word of God.

When Adam and Eve obeyed the serpent, and gave in to temptation, they became like the serpent. The serpent lied to them by saying, “You will not surely die” (Genesis 3:4). He denied what God had told them, “Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die” (Genesis 2:17). But when God asked Adam if he ate from the tree, Adam avoided a direct answer. He said, “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate” (Genesis 3:12). Instead of accepting responsibility for his sin Adam blamed Eve for giving him the fruit. And, Adam blamed God for giving him Eve who tempted him. Adam did not admit what he did, or take responsibility for it. He was deceptive like the serpent. In that way, he was like the serpent.



Was this idolatry? There weren’t any idols involved. In fact, in the Garden of Eden, no one would have made an idol because it was a holy place belonging to the one, true God. It is true that no idols were involved. On the other hand, the sin of idolatry involves rejecting God’s right to be worshipped, and putting something else in His place. That did take

place, when Adam and Eve believed the word of the serpent over the word of God. Maybe they didn't worship the serpent, but they certainly were not worshipping God as they should. It was humanity's first step toward idolatry.

Adam could have become like God by obeying God, bearing God's image. Instead, Adam gave himself the authority to distinguish right from wrong, overruling God. The serpent called this becoming "like God" (Genesis 3:3). But it was becoming God in a bad way. Only God has the ultimate authority to decide what is right and what is wrong. When Adam overruled God's command, Adam rejected God's right to decide right from wrong, and gave that authority to himself. As we know, when every human being thinks he or she has the right to decide what is right and what is wrong, disagreement and chaos result. We can thank Adam for getting humanity started in this direction.

## Worship causes people to bear the image of what they worship

Whenever a person has a great love and devotion for another person or for a specific goal, it shapes their character, and their life. The Bible makes it quite clear, that we become like what we most adore. In other, more biblical words, we will come to bear the image of what we worship.

Throughout the Bible we are told that people become like the idols that they worship. Psalm 115:8 says, "Those who make [idols] become like them". In Isaiah 6, God says that God's chosen people have become like idols whose eyes cannot see and ears cannot hear. They "keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeking, but do not perceive" (Isaiah 6:9).

When Moses was on Mount Sinai with God, Aaron made a golden calf, an idol, which they worshipped. The



Israelites became like cattle, needing someone to lead them. Due to their disobedience of worshipping the golden calf the Israelites are referred to as being like cattle. They are characterized as cattle that are "stiff necked" and will not obey (Exodus 32:9; cf. 33:3, 5; 34:9). Like cattle that have broken loose, they "turned aside quickly out of the way [God] commanded them" to follow (Exodus 32:8). Moses had to gather them together again, like cattle on the loose (Exodus 32:26). Only then was Moses able to "lead the people to the place about which" God had revealed to Moses (Exodus 32:34). Later, in Hosea 4:16, Israel is again compared to being like cattle, "Like a stubborn heifer Israel is stubborn".

God's people, were supposed to bring glory to God, and in turn, God would cause His glory to shine among them. Instead, they worshipped idols, causing God to say, "my people have changed their glory for that which does not profit" (Jeremiah 2:11).

Think of a person who seeks "fame and glory" and in the process turns away from everything that would glorify God. Just like the people in the Old Testament, "God will change their glory to shame" (Hosea 4:7). We must "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness" (Matthew 6:33). Only then will God cause His glory to shine in our lives.

## Jesus makes believers new; so, they can bear the image of God

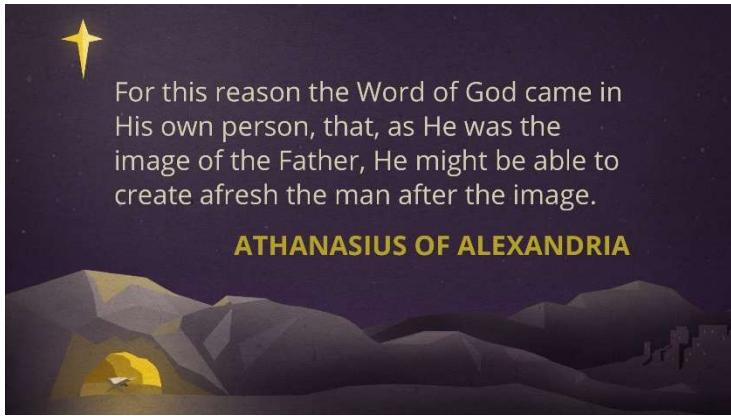
We've seen that the Old Testament teaches that people become like the object of their worship. That is how worship can change people for the worse. A person who worships a lifeless idol, an object of the created world, instead of the creator of the world, in time will become as lifeless as the object that is worshipped. That person will be spiritually dead. Now we will see what Paul, in the New Testament, teaches about how Jesus can change people into those who bear God's image well. He starts by transforming their minds and hearts.

Paul goes to considerable lengths to show us how Jesus reverses the effect of idolatry. Take a look at the chart below.

Romans 1:24 -28	Romans 12:1-2
<sup>24</sup> Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their <u>bodies</u> among themselves,	<sup>1</sup> I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your <u>bodies</u> as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.
<sup>25</sup> because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and <u>served</u> the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.	<sup>1</sup> I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your <u>spiritual worship</u> .
<sup>25</sup> because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and <u>worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator</u> , who is blessed forever! Amen.	<sup>2</sup> <u>Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.</u>
<sup>28</sup> And since they did not see fit to <u>acknowledge</u> God, God gave them up to a <u>debased mind</u> to do what ought not to be done.	<sup>2</sup> Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your <u>mind</u> , that by testing you may <u>discern</u> what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Paul explains that when people chose to worship a “creature” instead of the “Creator” (Romans 1:25) that God let them run loose. He “gave them up” to follow “the lusts of their hearts” (Romans 1:24). Like Adam, “they exchanged the truth about God for a lie” (Romans 1:25). Instead of drawing them back to Himself, “God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done” (Romans 1:28). God allowed them to continue in their sins.

Later, in chapter 12, Paul explains that when people believe in Jesus that they are made new. Instead of “dishonoring their bodies” (Romans 1:24), like those who worship idols, they “present their bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God” (Romans 12:1). This act of “spiritual worship” causes them to no longer be “conformed to this world” (Romans 12:2), because they are able to “die” to their sin. Miraculously, they are able to share in Jesus’ death. Because they can share in Jesus’ death on the cross they can be freed from bondage to sin.



Believers also share in Jesus’ resurrection. They are “transformed” from death to life. This happens by “the renewal” of the believer’s “mind” (Romans 12:2). Instead of seeking to satisfy sinful desires, believers’ minds can reliably “discern the will of God” (Romans 12:2). This comes primarily by prayerfully reading and studying the Bible, letting the Holy Spirit convict believers of sin, and setting them free from the bondage of sin. Through this process the hearts of believers become aligned with the heart of Jesus. This is how believers begin to bear the image of God, and reflect the image of God through their lives.

Chasing after the things of this world is a form of idolatry. It involves worshipping what was created instead of the Creator. This spiritual idolatry will cause you to die spiritually, because you will become like the object you worship. It cannot give you life. It will take your life from you. But if you come to Christ, and receive His gift of new life, then you will be transformed and able to bear the image of God. People will see God’s glory at work in you.

Look carefully at the chart above. Is your mind being transformed by God, or is your mind more like Adam’s and the Israelites, when they disobeyed God? Is your mind focused on yourself and your desires? Remember, you become like what you worship.

L	C	K	C	O	T	S	E	V	I	L	G
E	A	R	T	H	N	F	R	U	I	T	D
B	D	F	E	M	A	L	E	K	A	M	O
D	I	N	H	E	A	V	E	N	S	S	M
E	A	R	V	E	P	N	D	D	D	U	I
E	S	E	D	D	E	S	S	E	L	B	N
S	R	A	H	S	F	S	L	T	O	D	I
Y	G	H	S	I	F	A	I	A	H	U	O
D	E	A	E	N	I	P	V	E	E	E	N
O	L	C	V	C	L	L	I	R	B	G	E
O	A	O	O	Y	L	A	N	C	M	A	V
F	M	D	M	A	I	N	G	T	A	M	I
L	T	G	N	I	H	T	G	Y	N	I	G

**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.**” So God **created** man in his own **image**, in the **image** of God he **created** him; **male** and **female** he **created** them. 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.**” 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**.

(ESV)