

What does it mean that mankind was created in God's image?

- SUBJECT: What does it mean that mankind was created in God's image?
- COMPLEMENT: To be created in God's image is to know and experience something of God.
To be recreated in the image of Christ is to know God personally.
- IDEA: To be in God's image is to be the perfect worshipper.

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Immanuel Statement of Faith.** This topic correlates with the following section in the Immanuel Statement of Faith, incorporated into the *Immanuel Bible Church Constitution and By-Laws, June 22, 2014*. (See <http://immanuelbible.net/discover/teach>.)

SECTION 6 - SIN

We believe that God created Adam and Eve, the first humans, without sin and in perfect fellowship with Him (Genesis 1:26-28, 31; 2:18-24; James 3:9).

1. The rest of this paragraph talks about sin, which is not the subject of this topic.
2. However, we must recognize that, apart from Jesus Christ, there is no human since Adam's fall who has the ability to fully comprehend sinless perfection.
3. Our challenge is to glean from Scripture who and what God created when he created Adam and Eve, and what of that faultless image we bear, though sinners.
4. **NOTE: I WILL USE THE TERMS "MAN" AND "MANKIND" SYNONYMOUSLY. "MAN" INCLUDES WOMAN THROUGHOUT, UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED!**

B. Primary Scriptures (from Immanuel SoF)

1. Genesis 1:26–28 (All Scriptures are from the English Standard Version)

²⁶Then 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." ²⁷So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. ²⁸And 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."

2. Genesis 1:31

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

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3. Genesis 2:18–24

¹⁸Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him." ¹⁹Now out of the ground the LORD God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. ²⁰The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. ²¹So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. ²²And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. ²³Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." ²⁴Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

4. James 3:9

⁹With it (the tongue) we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse **people who are made in the likeness of God.**

II. WHAT DOES IT MEAN THAT MANKIND WAS CREATED IN GOD'S IMAGE?

A. WHAT WE MEAN BY THE "IMAGE OF GOD?" To understand the image "of God" we must first look at God.

- 1. Only God "is who he is"** (Exodus 3:14). His divine name YAHWEH identifies the true God as the only self-existent One. All other creatures, whether angels, humans, or animals, are created beings.
- 2. God is spirit, yet has "form."** (Philippians 2:6 - Jesus in his pre-incarnate state, existed in the "form" of God.) God's nature is primarily seen in his perfections or attributes.
- 3. God's perfections are incommunicable** (possessed only by God), **and communicable** (can be given to his creatures).
 - a. Incommunicable:** Examples include infinite eternity, immutability (unchanging), omniscient (all knowing), omnipresent (eternally everywhere all at once), omnipotent (all powerful), all-wise, and absolutely sovereign.
 - b. Communicable:** Holy, righteous, just, truth, love, mercy, responsible, creative, relational, etc. God also gives select incommunicable attributes in measure: Human souls are eternal, but not infinitely so. Humans may have authority, but it is limited, etc.

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4. **When God created mankind, he created beings to reflect who He is.** In his innocent state, all of man reflected all that God could communicate to him to be the image of God.

Psalm 8:3–9 - ³When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, ⁴what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him? ⁵Yet **you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor.** ⁶**You have given him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet, ...** ⁹O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

5. **Only Jesus, God's only Son, being God himself as the second person of the Trinity, is the perfect image of God.**

John 1:1 (ESV) ¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and **the Word was God. ...** ¹⁴**And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us,** and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

2 Corinthians 4:6 - ⁶For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the **glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.**

Hebrews 1:1–4 - ² ... in these last days [God] has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, **through whom also he created the world.** ³**He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. ...**

B. MAN IS CREATED.

1. All that exists is created. (Genesis 1:1)
2. Mankind was created by God. (See Genesis 1:26-28 above).

What are competing views for mankind's existence? To what extent do you think those views affect a person's understanding of their being created in the image of God?

3. As a created being, man is responsible to his creator.
 - a. Genesis 1:28 (above) - To be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, subdue and rule the earth.
 - b. As a creature created like God (with the ability to make choices and decisions), mankind must depend upon God and obey Him.

Genesis 2:15–17 - ¹⁵The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. ¹⁶And the LORD God commanded the man, saying,

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"You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, ¹⁷but 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."

Included in bearing God's image is dependence. Yet God is not dependent upon anyone or anything. Explain how both are true in Jesus Christ.

C. GOD CREATED MANKIND MALE AND FEMALE. Both men and women are made in the image of God.

Genesis 1:27 - ²⁷So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

God is one God in three persons, a mysterious "tri-unity" eternally relating to one another. Explain how humanity, as male and female, reflects this aspect of God's image.

D. MAN IS BOTH MATERIAL AND IMMATERIAL. Humans are both body and spirit. BOTH comprise what it means to be human. Death (separation) as the consequence of the fall is a departure from God's creation design. In the consummation all humans will be resurrected (spirits reunited with bodies) to either eternal life or eternal death.

1. Material. To be an "embodied spirit" is to be in the image of God.

Genesis 2:7 - ⁷then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.

2. Immaterial.

a. In the Bible, various terms are used to describe the immaterial aspect of a human: Spirit, soul, heart, conscience, mind, will, emotions, etc.

- There are exceptions, but the terms "spirit" and "soul" are generally synonymous.
- Conscience refers to the self-judging function.
- We tend to categorize thoughts into mind, will, and emotions.
- Categories can be useful, but people tend to defy them.
- Under the New Covenant, redeemed people experience regeneration (a resurrected spirit), and are also indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

John 3:7-8 - ⁷... 'You must be born again.' ⁸The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit."

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Romans 8:11 - ¹¹If the **Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you**, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through **his Spirit who dwells in you**.

Galatians 2:20 - ²⁰I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but **Christ who lives in me**. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

B. MAN IS A UNIT. He is not the sum of the above "parts," he is a single living soul.

Although man is a many-faceted being, and even though these facets of man participate in the conflict between the old and new natures when a person becomes a believer, still man is a unity and acts as one. What I do, I do, not a part of myself. It is a mistake to speak of "my old nature doing thus and so" or to say that "this stemmed from the soul and not the spirit." True, certain aspects of my being may originate an action, but that action is performed by me, not part of me. Too often when we speak like that, we tend to excuse ourselves from some evil action by relegating it to some part of our being (Ryrie, *Balancing the Christian Life*, p. 34)

E. THREE ASPECTS. Bringing it all together we can think of the image of God in man as having three aspects, the first being primary.

1. Substance - The characteristics of God which He could communicate to man, he did. You could say, **what man IS** reflects something of God.

With respect to man's pristine "pre-fall" state, this is true. To what extent is this true or not true of our fallen state? Our regenerate state?

2. Relationship - Man was created for relationship. Who we are is defined in part by who we are in relationship with others.

What do you think of this statement? Agree/ disagree? Is that a good thing or not?

3. Function - Man was created to work. Who we are is defined in part by what we do.

Genesis 1:28 - ²⁸And 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."

Man was created to do something. Work is a good part of the image of God in man. Explain how "who we are is defined in part by what we do."

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III. CONCLUSION

Through our fallen eyes, we can only see the image of God in man as a shadow. The image is there, though horribly marred. The apostle Paul describes fallen man in Romans 3:

Romans 3:10–12 ⁻¹⁰... “None is righteous, no, not one; ¹¹no one understands; no one seeks for God. ¹²All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.”

What if we put this in reverse? By our redemption, Jesus Christ reverses the fall, and in the consummation, we will bear God's image ways Adam and Eve could not.

- We will be righteous.
- We will understand.
- We will seek for God.
- We will eternally turn toward him.
- Individually we will be useful.
- Corporately we will be useful.
- We will always do good.
- Every one of us.