

PART 1

The image of God

Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea, and birds of the air, over the livestock over all the earth, and over all creatures that move along the ground.'

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

Genesis 1:26-27

WHAT IS MAN? WHAT IS OUR CORE IDENTITY? WHEN WE MEET others for the first time, one of the first questions we ask is what they do. In our culture profession and identity are closely linked. But our true identity is not our profession, but who we are. We are the image of God.

Is a human being an animal, like Darwin professes? Or is mankind different? The Bible says that Man is created "in the image of God". But what is Man and what does it mean to be in the image of God? How can Man be in the image of the Almighty God whose greatness and power is beyond both our understanding and ability to describe? And if Man is the image of God, how can Man sin? God can't sin.

These and many other questions will be discussed in this booklet. Several Bible commentaries have been helpful in writing this booklet, especially the book *Imago Dei* written by Jan-Olav Henriksen, a professor at Oslo University.

Psalms 8:3-9

***W**hen I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them?*

You have made them a little lower than the angels and crowned them with glory and honor. You made them rulers over the works of your hands; you put everything under their feet: all flocks and herds, and the animals of the field, the birds in the sky, and the fish in the sea, all that swim the paths of the seas. Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

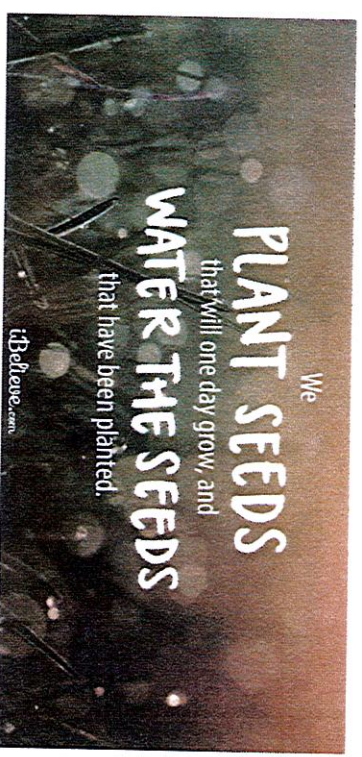
The creation of man

God spoke and creation came into being, but with Man the process was different: God stepped down and formed Man from the dust of the ground and blew into him the breath of life (Genesis 2:7). This difference alone clearly indicates that Man has a unique and personal relationship with God.

THE MODERN COMMENTARY TO THE TORAH WRITES ABOUT THIS ON page 22:

"Man is placed on the stage of creation after all else has been formed; he is represented as the crown of God's labors. Man is formed in the image of God, in His likeness. These words reflect the wonder of man's special stature in Creation, of his unique intellectual capacity, which bears the imprint of the Creator. Marvelling at man's powers, the Bible finds him to be a little less than divine (Psalms 8:6). The likeness to God also describes man's moral potential and the essential holiness of man, and by implication the dignity of all men of all races and nations.

Man is the image of God by virtue of his spiritual nature of the breath of God by which he, formed from the dust of the earth, became a living soul (Genesis 2:7)."



Notice when God comments on the different stages and days of Creation, the Bible says that God saw that it was "good". But after Man was created, God said that His creation was "very good" (Genesis 1:31).

Man's identity is linked to his relationship with God, without which Man cannot understand who or what he is, nor understand the meaning of life. People travel the world to "find themselves" but cannot do so, because Man's identity is connected to his very special relationship with the Creator. Man was created by God for an important purpose; he was not made by chance. □



Let us make man

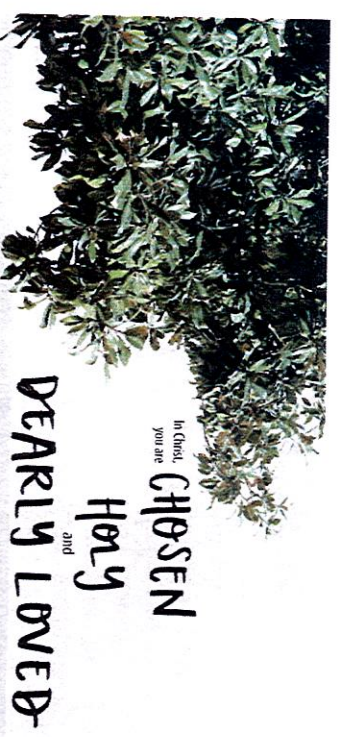
There are three main ways to understand the use of the first-person plural in this verse. One is that God is using the royal plural form. A king would use the royal plural form instead of the singular when speaking. Most scholars lean to this understanding.

SOME SCHOLARS UNDERSTAND THIS VERSE TO SUPPORT THE IDEA that God is a trinity or that the Father and the Son are speaking together. The third possibility is that God was talking to and including His angelic council, which does occur a few times elsewhere in the Bible (Job 1:6; 38:7; Genesis 3:22 and Isaiah 6:8).

In any case, there's a comparison between Man and God here, possibly also between Man and the angelic realm, indicating that Man would resemble them by ruling over, and taking care of, God's Creation on earth—Man, being the crown of God's Creation was to take care of it.

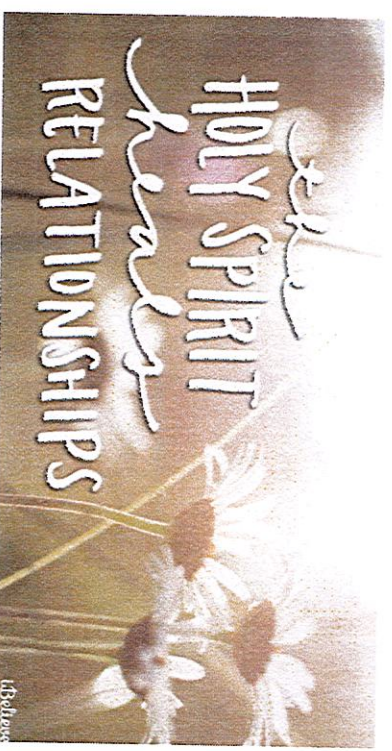
God the Creator cannot sin, but Man can. If Man was created in the image of God, how could he sin? Man could sin because Adam lacked the character of God, and he did not have the Holy Spirit to follow or to lead him. Man was created as an unpolished image of God Almighty.

Adam and Eve were offered the Holy Spirit, symbolized by the tree of life, which they needed in order to fully become God's image. But they did not take of it. They were deceived and wanted instead to experience and learn about good and evil by themselves instead of listening to God's instruction



on the matter. Nevertheless Man continued to function as the ruler over God's creation on earth also after Adam sinned, even though they had lost their close relationship. Even though he was the incomplete image of God and had sinned, the responsibility to multiply and fill the earth with mankind remained with Man.

God rested on the seventh day, but notice, unlike the other days of the Creation week, this day did not end. God was not finished creating man in His image. For man to truly become God's image it would require a long learning process, the unfolding of which is a major theme of the Bible. □



In His image and likeness



*In the creation account,
God creates the animals
after their kind and the
crown of Creation is
Man, who is created
after the God kind.
Man is created in the
"image" and "likeness"
of God.*

THESE TWO WORDS ARE LOOKED UPON AS SYNONYMS BY MANY, but the Hebrew words imply a slight difference.

According to the Gesenius Hebrew Lexicon, the Hebrew word for "image" originates from a Hebrew word for "shadow". This seems to imply that man's physical body somehow resembles God. God is a spirit being, but this verse implies that God can manifest Himself with a spiritual body which in some sense similar to ours (Exodus 33:20-23). We are created as some kind of shadow of His appearance. Man is the corporeal image of the incorporeal God.

The Hebrew word used for the image of Nebuchadnezzar's statue in Daniel 3:1 is related to the word used in Genesis 1:26, where God made Man is His image. In the ancient world,

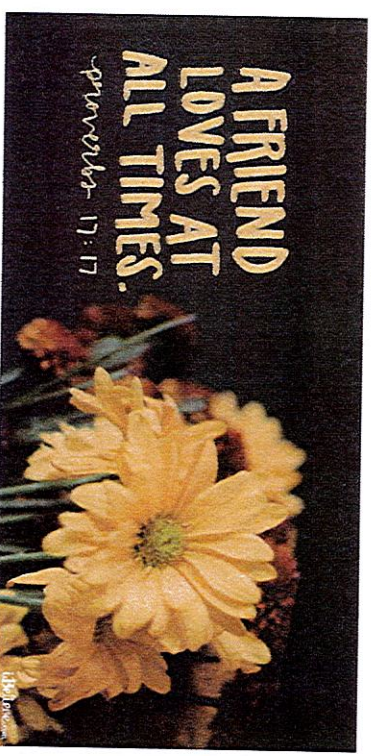
kings would place monumental statues of themselves at various locations to remind everyone who was the ruler. The king of Babylon did the same.

Man was told by God not to make, nor worship, any images of animals or humans, because there was already an image of God: mankind. Man was created in the image of God and is to remind all Creation that God is the Ruler and Creator.

Man being the image of God implies that Man was to have a relationship with his Creator, which was established during the very act of creation. Being the image of God is not something we have earned, nor deserve; it is a gift from God. This relationship and role are the intrinsic purpose of every human being, of every color and race. Every person is made in the image of God, even though most people do not recognize this truth. But everyone who has ever lived is made to be the image of God, and we are to treat everyone accordingly. Everyone is a potential child of God.

Being in the image of God gives Man humility and dignity. Humility, because he recognizes that he is not God and is only an image of someone much more powerful than himself. Dignity, because Man is reminded that he is a reflection of the Almighty Creator God and has been given this special relationship with Him.

Being the image of God implies that Man is a relational being, having a relationship with God but also with other



human beings. Man was to resemble God, who is a relational being, as we have already seen.

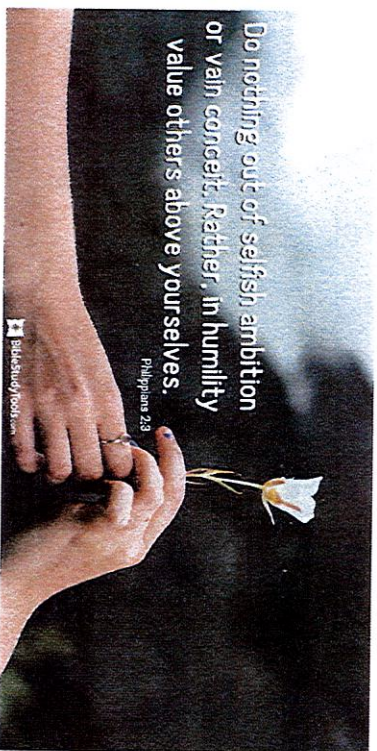
Being the image of God implies that Man is a moral being with a free will. He is free to choose which values to live by, for his own good or his own detriment. He is unlike animals in this regard.

Being the image of God, Man is to a much higher degree than God's other creatures, a creative being, reflecting God in that respect.

The Hebrew phrase "created in His image and likeness" can also be translated "created to be the image and likeness of God" implying both a process, and that the image was not completed at creation.

The phrase "Man being in the image of God" is not primarily describing Man himself, but rather it signifies that Man is to bear witness to who God is and what He is doing.

The Hebrew word for "likeness", on the other hand is more abstract than the word for "image", and seems to indicate "resemblance". Man resembled or was somehow similar to God. Some think this has to do with Man having the creative, moral and spiritual aspects God. It is interesting that the Bible says nothing about Cain or Abel, but Genesis 5:3 says that Seth was in the likeness and image of Adam. Seth apparently looked like his father and also had the mental, character and abilities of his father. □



Genesis 2:19

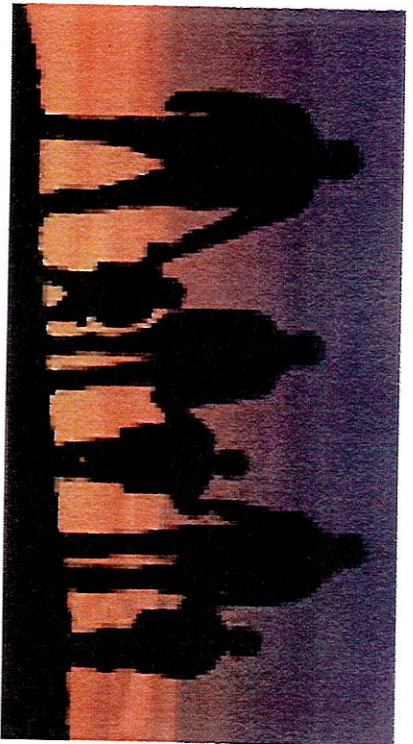
Man partakes in creation

"Out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to Adam to see what he would call them. And whatever Adam called each living creature that was its name" (Genesis 2:19).

IN JEWISH CULTURE THE GIVING OF A NAME WAS AN IMPORTANT TASK and was looked upon as a part of the creation process. Adam was an active partner in God's creation by giving names to the animals. We are also to give names to our sons and daughters, which in fact are God's future children.

In our Western culture a name is only a tag telling which family we come from and what people call us. In ancient Jewish culture a person's name was much more important, because a name would often tell something about the person. We see this in the name of "Jesus" which in Hebrew is Joshua or Yeshua and means "Jehovah (or Jahveh) saves". The name of Jesus says who our Savior is. The English word "Christ" comes from the Greek word "Christos" which is just the Hebrew word for "Messiah" translated into Greek. So, the name "Christ" tells you who the Messiah, which means the "anointed One", is. There is a lot of valuable information in the name "Jesus Christ".

But we are not only to give names to our children, the purpose of mankind is to reproduce. In so doing we "create"



new potential children of God for His eternal kingdom. Instead of God personally creating all human beings, as he did Adam, He "creates" future sons and daughters through us! We are to take an active part in God's plan of creation. And we are not only to give birth and give them names. We are also to train them, teach them and help them become mature adults with a relationship with God, so that in the future they may become members of God's eternal family.

We are in many different ways partners with God, letting God do His work through us. □

