

Dr. Meredith Kline, Kingdom Prologue, Lecture 15

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When we're talking about man in the image of God, you don't think just in the abstract, but in a very concrete way, we are made in this likeness. This likeness of God that was present from creation on and in the endoxation of the Spirit, the glory Spirit who manifested himself on earth as the glory cloud spirit.

Three elements of the image of God in man

Now then those three elements, does the text bear them out? Is it the case that when we read man as image of God that we read about his dominion and his rule, and so on? Obviously it is. In fact, so much so that some people say that's the whole idea that the image of God is exhausted by that one idea – that we are like God-kings. It's not the whole thing but certainly is a prominent part of it. Again the opening verse, there Genesis 1:26, 27 “let us make man in our image and let him have dominion over all things.” So there's no doubt about the dominion being a very central ingredient in what constitutes our likeness to God. Again, as Psalm 82 brought out, God is *Elohim*, the angels are *Elohim* because they share in his judgment, and human beings who are on earth to share in that judgment are also *Elohim*. That is a very important part of it.

Genesis 3:22 “man has become like one of us”

The next passage we want to look at is Genesis 3:22. We looked at it from the point of view of trying to explain the “let us.” Now we look at it from the point of view of what it says now man has become like one of us with respect to their knowing of good and evil. This sort of raises the question of the dominion of the tree of knowledge of good and evil to which I guess not tonight but next time we'll be saying something. But here in 3:22, God says that somehow, even in connection with the Fall, you would expect him to say, “now he has become unlike one of us, he's fallen.” But as a matter of fact, he says, “now he has become like one of us more than ever before.” What was it in the process of the Fall that man did that would justify God saying, “now he has become like one of us”? All I

can figure out is this: in the process of the Fall, man had engaged in this judicial function and capacity in a more direct and intense way than ever before. How? Because now his probationary task is precisely this: that he should be an *Elohim*, a judge over Satans. God brought Satan into the garden, to be damned, to be judged, to be condemned by Adam. Adam was set up there in the image of God in the likeness and the name of God to act like a judge over against the enemy of God, to pronounce evil as evil, to keep him out of the good place, the sanctuary.

So here Adam, this earthly creature, suddenly found himself involved in things of heavenly moment. Here there is war in heaven. There is war in heaven between God and the angels and Satan. Adam here finds himself caught up into that judicial capacity to speak a word of judgment with respect to these tremendous things going on in heaven. So in that process, he has more intensely engaged in this judicial functioning, this God-like functioning, than had he at any previous point to the extent that in formal sense God is able to say, “he has become like one of us” with respect to knowing of good and evil.

Tree of knowledge of Good and Evil

That by the way, in the case of the tree of knowing of good and evil, is what that expression means. “Knowing of good and evil” is an expression that is used to describe kings, judges, who are confronted--whose baby is this, Solomon? You have to judge good and evil, to know between good and evil. That’s what this expression means. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil was the tree at which Adam would be confronted with a decision between good and evil, between Satan and God and he must judge accordingly. And of course, in substance, he fails to do it, but in a form of function, he doesn’t. That’s what God-likeness has to do with knowing good and evil, discerning between the two, judging between the two, acting like a king and a judge. So that’s Gen. 3:22.

Other passages on the Image of God

We looked at Psalm 82, and of course, Psalm 8, itself. Psalm 8:5 which is a beautiful exposition of Genesis 1:26, 27 where it expounds “what is man that thou

art mindful of him,” etc. “you have made him a little lower than the angels, you have crowned him with glory and honor and set him over all the works of your hands.” Psalm 8 is an extended exposition of this very subject, focusing on the idea, of course, man’s dominion over all creatures.

One other passage within Genesis itself that I believe again brings out the fact that man’s likeness to God is the image of God has to do with his engaging in the judicial function. This one is found in Genesis 9, as you recognize as part of the covenant of Common Grace that God makes with all the world after the Flood. Among other things, God is reinstating the state as the executive arm to deal with criminal offenses, in particular with the offense of murder, of shedding the blood of man. So the text then says, “whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed for in the image of God has God made man.” The traditional understanding of this is why the crime of murder is tended by so severe a penalty. The answer is then said to be: because the victim is someone who is made in the image of God. Therefore, murder deserves capital punishment.

That’s a reasonable interpretation. I don’t think it’s the right one. I think the right one is this. It is not: why is the punishment so severe? But how can it be that a mere human being would be given the responsibility and the duty in fact of putting another human being to death? How could that be? Well, because that human being is a God-like. He was made in the image of God who judges and then put to death. Don’t you know that we will judge angels. After the Fall it reminds us that this is certainly so. This is our nature as being made in the image of God that we should have the judicial function with all of the Solomon extreme possibilities involved like capital punishment. So understood in that way, Genesis 9:6 would also be emphasizing then the judicial aspect of man being made in the image of God. These, I think, are the main passages where, especially in the book of Genesis itself, you get the idea of man being the image of God.

Genesis 5 and the image of God: Image and son overlapping

The only other one, and even this one, in my book *Images of the Spirit*, I try to interpret it in connection with the theme of kingship and so on. But quite obviously, Genesis 5, remember, is the one that speaks about God made man in his own image and Adam has his son in his own image. That passage brings about another very important aspect of this whole thing we are talking about. Image of God and Son of God are overlapping ideas. To be the image of God means to be like God. A son is like the father. So image and sonship are mutually explanatory. It isn't just that some say that man is a representative of God. Some argue that we are the image of God in a sense that we are the representatives of God. Yes, we are the representatives of God. But the idea of the image is not simply that we are representatives or his vice-regents, but that we are representational, get the difference? Not representatives of his legal authority only, but we are representational of God just like the son who is a chip-off-the-old-block. That's the idea. The son is like the father. We are like the God I think that's the point there in Genesis 5 and generally that's something to keep in mind when you're trying to describe what it means to be image of God.

Image as moral excellence: Eph. 4:24 and Col 3:10

Now the other components, the three components we said of the glory-Spirit, the heavenly reality, God: he is enthroned, he has dominion. Secondly, he has this moral excellence, the foundations of his throne. "Holy, holy, holy" they ascribe to him, justice, equity and so on. So the second ingredient which comes out more in connection with the idea of our being recreated when we have Christ breathing on us the Holy Spirit recreating us in his holy image. There are the two classic passages: Ephesians 4:24 and Colossians 3:10. Remember we were talking about the traditional way of describing the image of God, the broader image and the upper image, the narrower one; the narrower one is the one that has to do with moral excellence. This is the wrong approach to this thing. But the two passages that would be especially useful in describing man's narrower, his conformity of

moral excellence are Ephesians 4:24 and Colossians 3:10. To the effect remember the language is something that we are being recreated in the image of God in righteousness, holiness, in love of the truth, and so on.

Now, mind you, this is not just some general moral faculty. This isn't just that we have a moral faculty; the devil has a moral faculty. That's not what we are talking about. We are talking about moral excellence. We are characterized by righteousness, and holiness. We love the truth, especially as judges, we love the truth and justice. In our recreation, we are recreated that way. We had lost that in the Fall, but in Christ, we are recreated. So there's that second ingredient that comes out.

Visual dimension of the Image

Then the third element is this visual dimension. God is this glory-spirit manifestation, luminous, visually luminous. Adam doesn't have this at the beginning. Two of the three things we've talked about are there at the creation. He's created with two ingredients of glory and he has the prospect of the third one. But meanwhile, he's created with a natural body, which is not luminous. It's this present body which is needful for the purposes of history as God gifts him with procreation and so on. With a view, however, that one day then that process, that cultural filling of the earth will be done, and the time will come now to enter into the upper register, to be glorified. When man is glorified, then he takes on physically this third ingredient, and now he is the full-orbed image of God, in terms of all three ingredients.

This for example is anticipated in the experience of Moses. The experiences of Moses and the other prophets in the Old Testament are interesting. One of the chapters in my book *Images of the Spirit* deals with the prophetic model of the image of God. The experience of Moses and other prophets anticipates this whole thought of our being recreated in the image of God, including this third ingredient. So Moses comes down from the mount, it is the encounter with the glory-spirit. It is a creative thing, isn't it? Adam at the beginning is encountered by the glory-

spirit and takes on his likeness. Moses goes up the mountain and there's the glory-cloud up there and that is a recreative encounter. He comes down transformed with even this third ingredient. So his face as Michelangelo's horns bring out the idiom on the statue of Moses, the horning, the radiance, the rays of light going from him in anticipation of the ultimate experience of human beings that they will be glorified. If you look around in the New Testament, I think especially, it's this aspect that when we see him, we will be like him, and so on. The emphasis of likeness to Christ is likeness to him in his parousia glory--when he comes with the glory of the Father and all the holy angels.

The whole structure of the Book of Revelation, in a way, illustrates this theme. The structure of the book of Revelation begins with the thought of churches being in the image of Christ, Christ is the light of the world. He stands there, this dazzling figure; John falls down before him as dead. You see this light of the world standing in the midst of the seven churches whom he is recreating in his own likeness. Therefore, they are little lights; they are little lampstands already reflecting his image. The book of Revelation continues through all of the trauma, trials, and what not that go on until you come to the end of the book. Then these little lampstands are all caught up and coalesce with the light of the world and the glory of heaven. They are all part of this heavenly temple reality. That's the whole flow of the book and that's the consummation of this whole process of this redemptive recreation that we shall be like our Lord, even though his physical glory as well as being, of course, confirmed inwardly in moral excellence, moral righteous, holiness, and love of the truth. In terms of what is the image of God?--that is where the biblical evidence points very specifically.

The when of the image of God?—different stages post-fall

Now, when you're talking about the image of God, you have to ask when as well as what. We talked about what. In a way, we've been talking about when. There are different stages of creation after the fall. As a result of regeneration, and finally as a as a result of final judgment and glorification. At the creation of the

world back here, as we've said, Adam has two of the ingredients not the third one yet.

When the Fall takes place, what happens to the image of God? Now that is when, at that point. Does man lose the whole thing or does he still have it even in his unregenerate state? Think of the unregenerate. Are they still the image of God in any sense at all? Now, it might be easy to say no; they've lost the whole thing. But there is at least a couple of passages that make us hesitate. One is the passage we just looked at, in Genesis 9:6. On either interpretation, the traditional one or the one I suggested, you get the thought that man, even fallen man, is the image of God because if you are taking the traditional way, the victim of a murder is going to certainly in some case going to be an unbeliever, and in a traditional view, that victim is said to be in the image of God. Or on my view, in some cases, the one who is executing judgment is going to be an unbeliever in the institution of the state. So either way, unbelievers are described in the way that suggests they have the dignity of being somehow the image of God.

The other passage is the one in James. Maybe someone could help me with the exact verse. James 3:9. Is that the right verse? Which is the one that speaks about the use of the tongue? In James 3:9, his point is: be careful with the use of the tongue. Isn't it terrible the way that with our tongues, we bless; but also with our tongues, we curse others who are the image of God. Now who would it be that we would more likely be cursing? Not fellow Christians, but it would more likely be unbelievers and so be careful that you don't curse individuals. Somehow these two verses, and maybe some other evidence might occur to you too, suggest that we have to be speak more guardedly and in some formal way, say that unbelievers still have something of the image of God. Whatever is not of faith is sin so anything they do is sin, yet in the formal sense, it is better that children obey their parents than not to obey their parents. All kinds of other things are in a formal sense good. To that extent therefore the theologians usually speak about some sort of civil good at least that unbelievers still are able to do. In God's

common grace they are still able to occupy offices of governors and kings and so on, which will fit into that category of God-likeness. It's a very modified and limited type of thing.

Regenerate and the image of God

Now, what about if you are regenerate? Well, then of course, things are enhanced. It's not just that in some formal sense that you do good, but the deepest drive in your heart is now the love of God. Although you still sin, yet now you are recreated in Christ Jesus, in righteousness, holiness, and love of truth. That's the deepest truth about your spiritual state. Whatever imperfections then are still there, and sanctification is progressive. But nevertheless, that second ingredient is decisively there in your heart and there is progress in sanctification.

In terms of the exercise of dominion, you as well as unbelievers of course still have this basic dominion over the sub-human creation. In terms of special offices of governors, kings, and so on, believers may do those things and so on. In terms of our mystical relationship to Christ, we are there with him and his rule over the world in our union with him and the Spirit. There are different things that you can say our experience has. Of course, unbelievers don't have that glorification at all and believers don't have glorification yet while we are in the body.

When the Lord returns: image--glorification

So we come to the next point, the next *when* is when the Lord returns and when we are glorified. Then in terms of believers, then our dominion is perfected over, then we sit and reign with Christ over all things. He shares his throne with us over the whole cosmos. So our God-likeness in terms of majesty of rule is perfected as we reign with Christ. Our inward state of holiness and righteousness is perfected and we are like the Lord in that respect. Now plus, we are now glorified when we see him in his glory, like Moses seeing the glory cloud, we will radiate not just the head but we will undergo a metamorphosis, a transfiguration, whereby our whole being is luminous like the endoxated Spirit, like the Christ

who comes in the glory of the Father with all of His holy angels. Then we will be in the fullest three-orbed sense in the image of God in terms of all the glory components.

Reprobate image lost after the judgment

That of course leaves what about the reprobate after the judgment? There I think what we couldn't say previously because of God's common grace and what not, now there's no more common grace. Now the reprobates are 100% epistemologically self-conscious devils like their father the Devil. I would say that now that the reprobate in hell have lost every vestige; they are no longer in the image of God at all which is not to say they are no longer human. Remember, at the outset we said that the usual discussions of the image of God with theologians end up talking image of God as though it could be equated with humanness. If it were then to say that the reprobate had lost the image would be to say that they were no more human. In my position that does not follow. They are no longer the image of God but they still remain human because the image of God large in constituting what is human. It is not the whole thing. So those in hell continue to be human but they have nothing of dominion over God's creation. They are completely devilish in their inward nature and they do not have anything of the glorified existence of God's people.

Thus wondrously Yahweh-*Elohim* created man and this then is what constitutes God's claim on his gratitude along with – this we'll have to deal with that next time—the nature of the world over which he made him a King which is the Garden of Eden. So next time, we want to go on and talk about that in terms of its nature as a holy sanctuary but also as a paradise, a Kingdom.

Any announcements? We passed out the hand-outs. We announced about the term paper instead of a mid-term exam. If anyone is involved in that and wasn't here at that time, catch me about the details. Also I promised to bring the article about the cover-over or hover-over idea for Passover.

Transcribed by HanByul Chang
Rough edited by Ted Hildebrandt