

Foundations of Faith: People

Summary: *all church members should understand and agree with the following*

Image: People, both men and women, are created in God's image, to reflect God's character and represent God to the rest of the world.

Multiplication: God desires his image – character and representation – to spread throughout the Earth, through properly raising children to be followers of Christ and through worldwide evangelism.

Christ as Image: Christ is the ultimate image of God the Father, being both the Son of God and human. God the Father has anointed Christ to be his ultimate representative on Earth, and has placed all things under Christ's authority.

Christians as Image: We in the church follow Christ's leadership and cooperate in the Holy Spirit's work to transform us to be more like Christ, so that we can better represent God and reflect his character to the world.

Acts of Sin: All people in the world commit acts of sin [thoughts or actions that are against the will or character of God], though believers seek to grow less and less sinful.

Imputed Sin: All people in the world are held guilty by God for the first sin by Adam and Eve.

Inherited Sin: All people after Adam and Eve are born with a corrupted nature, sometimes called a "sin nature."

Detail:¹ all teachers and leaders should understand and agree with the following

Mankind was created in God's image

God created us to be like him, in his image [Genesis 1.26-28].

† Genesis 1.26-27 [NET]: “Then God said, ‘Let us make humankind in our image, after our likeness, so they may rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move on the earth.’ God created humankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them, male and female he created them.”

We are like God in several ways, not the least in that God gave us rational, creative, and moral capacity, we have self-awareness and self-determination, and we have divine awareness. God created people to a much higher level than anything else on Earth.

God created us to be in community with each other as a family, male and female [Genesis 1.27-28; 2.21-25], just as the Godhead is a community of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

God invested in us some of his authority and responsibility on Earth, initially to rule over the rest of creation [Genesis 1.26-28]. God created mankind to represent God to the rest of creation, rule over the rest of creation for God. There is promise and command here. People are to trust and obey. In other words, as we represent God here, we are to *be* his image: the three circles illustration shows God is in authority over the human family, and the human family [with man at the head] represents God to the rest of creation. God even invested in us some of his glory [Psalm 8.3-9].

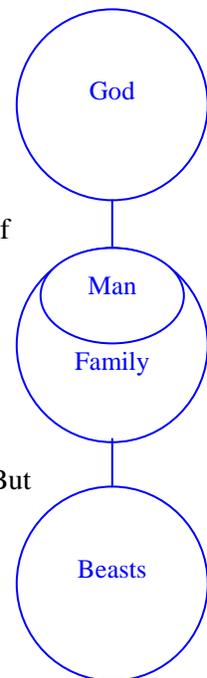
† Psalm 8.5b-6 [NET]: “You grant mankind honor and majesty; you appoint them to rule over your creation; you have placed everything under their authority...”

When God commanded people to be fruitful and multiply [Genesis 1.28], his intention was not that we create just more people, but more images of God! Like everything else, man and woman will reproduce after its kind, so generations will be like their parents. But mankind was made in God's image, so should be like our Father, God. Jesus extended this desire to see the image of God multiplied throughout the Earth and revealed we could do so by spiritual means of evangelism [Matthew 28.18-20].

† Genesis 1.28 [NASB]: “God blessed them; and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.’”

Our bodies in some way are in the image of God. God does not have a physical body, for he is spirit [John 4.24] and has forbidden the worship of physical images [Exodus 20.4-6]. However, when Ezekiel saw God [Ezekiel 1.1-28], he saw a figure that looked like a man but ablaze with fire and a radiance like a rainbow, and said [v.28, NASB], “Such was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD [Yahweh].” In some way we cannot fully understand, our bodies do reflect the glory of God and are part of being made in his image, in that we are both material and immaterial in composition and God made the whole of us in his image.

One of the main themes of the Bible is about God creating a representative people for himself. God said mankind was to represent God and rule the earth in God's name [Genesis 1.26-28]. When the first people fell into sin, God promised that a deliverer would come to bring about a new creation, restoring the divine

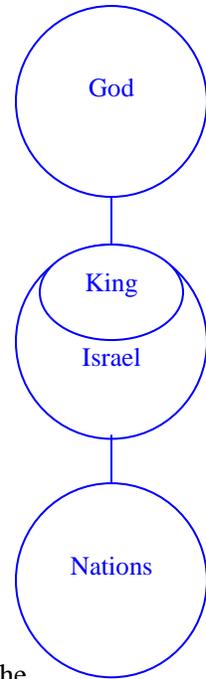


¹ A good source of basic theology is Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology* [Chicago: Moody Press; 1999].

order and delivering the earth from the effects of sin [Genesis 3.15; 2 Peter 3.13]. As part of this process, God promised Abraham that God would use Abraham and his descendents to raise up a nation to represent himself and bless the rest of the world [Genesis 12.1-3]. It was from this representative people that the Messiah, Jesus, came so as to be that perfect man representing God the Father [Matthew 1.1-17], to be the deliverer of mankind from the effects of sin [John 3.16], and, eventually to bring about the new creation [Revelation 21.1].

† Genesis 12.1-3 [NASB]: *“Now the LORD said to Abram, ‘Go forth from your country, And from your relatives And from your father's house, To the land which I will show you; ² And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing; ³ And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.’”*

Israel has been God’s chosen people. From the time of God’s covenant with Abraham until the formation of the church, Abraham’s descendents in Israel were supposed to be the people who represented God to the rest of the world [Genesis 12.1-3; 17; 22.17-18; 28.13-14]. As the modified three circles illustration shows, the King was God’s anointed man on earth, and the people of Israel, being obedient to the king, would represent God together to the rest of the nations. Much of the Old Testament describes the repeated failures of people to represent God well, even his chosen people of Israel.



Today, every believer in Christ is to represent God to the rest of the world. We still bear the responsibility of being made in God’s image, the responsibility of representing God to the world. In the church age, the church has temporarily replaced Israel as the representative people of God. Christ is the anointed king of Israel [Psalms 2; 110] and head of the church, and God the Father has placed all under his authority [Ephesians 1.22; Colossians 1.18; Matthew 28.18; John 3.35]. Christ [which means “Anointed One”] is God the Father’s anointed king, his ultimate representative on Earth. We in the church obey our king and under his direction we represent God the Father to the rest of the nations. As we will see in the lesson on “sanctification,” God is at work to transform believers to be like Christ, to become the image of God they were created to be [Colossians 3.10].

† Ephesians 1.22 [NET]: *“And God put all things under Christ's feet, and he gave him to the church as head over all things.”*

Every person is tainted with three types of sin

An act of sin is going against the will of God, thus it is described as lawlessness [1 John 3.4]. Theologian Robert Pyne calls it “unfaith,” and describes it as “whenever we attempt to solve our problems or satisfy our desires apart from God’s directives (Num. 20:12).”² The word translated as “lawlessness” is used in the New Testament to represent lacking in faith, digressing in character, and being unrighteous, ungodly, empowered by Satan, and opposed to God and Christ.

† 1 John 3.4 [NET]: *“Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; indeed, sin is lawlessness.”*

The first people, Adam and Eve, chose to do something God had forbidden [Genesis 3.1-7]. They made a deliberate choice to go against God’s will, and in the process they chose to believe something other than

² Robert A. Pyne, *Humanity & Sin: The Creation, Fall, and Redemption of Humanity* [Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999], 140.

what God had told them to be true. Thus, they doubted God's Word and went against it; they did not trust or obey; they gave up their dependence on God and their devotion to God. These are the roots of all sin. Because God is righteous, any sin against him is wickedness and all unrighteous behavior is sin [1 John 5.17; James 4.17].

The immediate results of this sin were catastrophic [Genesis 3.16-24]. The results of this first sin affected all the world and all people since! God said there now would be great pain in motherhood, marriages would have difficulties, the ground would not be as fertile or as easy to work, and people would have to toil all their lives. Additionally, Adam and Eve were exiled from the Garden of Eden, the idyllic home God had made for them, and were promised physical death.

Because of the original sin, all people are born into a sinful state. This is called "inherited sin." The sin of Adam and Eve tainted their human nature, and this corruption was passed on at birth to their children and continues to be passed on to all children today [Psalm 51.5; Romans 5.12; Titus 1.15]. This sometimes is called our "sin nature."

† Psalm 51.5 [NIV]: *"Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me."*

Because of the original sin, God holds all people guilty [Romans 5.12-21]. This is called "imputed sin."

† Romans 5.18a [NET]: *"Consequently, just as condemnation for all people came through one transgression..."*

All people commit acts of sin [Romans 3.9-10, 23; James 3.2]. Any violation of God's will is a sin, and we all have violated his will as expressed in scripture. It is worse to openly defy God than to fail despite trying hard to obey [Luke 12.47-48; Numbers 15.30-31], yet both situations result in sin.

† Romans 3.23 [NASB]: *"... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."*

There are penalties and negative effects from sin

The penalty for inherited sin is spiritual death, which means separation from the life of God in this earthly existence [Ephesians 2.1-3]. If this condition is not corrected during the course of physical life, then the result is eternal death, eternal separation from God [Revelation 20.11-15]. Related to this is a loss of some of the glory people were designed to reflect from God [see Colossians 3:4; Philippians 3:21, which discuss the need for restoration of this glory].

† Ephesians 2.1 [NASB]: *"And you were dead in your trespasses and sins..."*

The negative effects of our inherited sin nature include a loss of capacity: we experience a blinded intellect; foolishness from a corrupted mind; an evil and idolatrous heart; defiled emotions, passions, behavior, and character; and an enslaved will [Romans 1.21-32; 7.20]. We also have experienced a loss of community in our family life as predicted by God [Genesis 3.16].

† Romans 1.21 [NET]: *"For although they knew God, they did not glorify him as God or give him thanks, but they became futile in their thoughts and their senseless hearts were darkened."*

The penalty for imputed sin is physical death [Romans 5.12-14]. We have been cut off from the tree of life in the garden of Eden, so – like Adam and Eve – we suffer the penalty of physical death.

† Romans 5.12-14a [NASB]: *"Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned – for until [or before] the Law sin was in the world [already], but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam..."*

The negative effect of imputed sin is a loss of authority. God’s design for people was to represent him here and rule the Earth [Genesis 1.26-28], but Adam and Eve gave up that right to rule when they obeyed Satan, an evil entity [Genesis 3.1-6]. Jesus called Satan “the ruler of this world” [John 12.31] and he has been called “the god of this age” [2 Corinthians 4.3-4], referring to the fact that Satan tricked Adam and Eve into giving up their reign of the Earth when they chose to obey him instead of God. Negative effects also include those of troubled lives that God spoke to Adam and Eve, as a result of the whole Earth suffering under sin [Genesis 3.16-19].

† 2 Corinthians 4.3-4 [NET]: *“But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing, among whom the god of this age has blinded the minds of those who do not believe so they would not see the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God.”*

The penalty for personal sin is a loss of fellowship, or intimacy, with God. God is pure and holy [Leviticus 19.2; Revelation 4.8], so any sin on our part takes us away from him. However, sin cannot cause a Christian to lose salvation [which we will discuss in another lesson].

† Leviticus 19.2 [NET]: *“Speak to the whole congregation of the Israelites and tell them, ‘You must be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy.’”*

The negative effects of personal sins are many, including earthly human consequences [such as jail for legal crimes], earthly corrective action from God [Psalm 39.11], deception of the mind and hardening of the heart [Hebrews 3.13], spiritual bondage to sin [John 8.34; Romans 6.16-18], physical illness [John 5.14], a loss of heavenly treasure [2 Corinthians 5.10; 1 Timothy 6.18-19], and negative effects on other people.

† Psalm 39.11 [NASB]: *“With reproofs You chasten a man for iniquity; You consume as a moth what is precious to him; Surely every man is a mere breath...”*

God has a plan to restore his representation model

God progressively revealed throughout the Bible his plan to restore his model of people representing him. We now know that this plan and promise centers on Jesus. Jesus is making a people for himself [Titus 2.14]. Ultimately, when Jesus returns, he will rule as king through Israel, restoring that model of representation [Matthew 25.31; Revelation 19.15; 20; Psalms 2; 110], and he will have purified his people to represent God as one human family with Jesus at the head, restoring that model of representation [Revelation 20.6].

† Titus 2.14 [NET]: *“He gave himself for us to set us free from every kind of lawlessness and to purify for himself a people who are truly his, who are eager to do good.”*

For this time period, the church serves as God’s representative people [Titus 2.14; 1 Peter 2.9]. Christ is the ultimate image of God, being both God and man, and he is head of the church [Ephesians 1.22; Colossians 1.18]. Just as the people of Israel were to have a godly king who was the ultimate representation of God on earth, and they were to follow that king and collectively represent God to the nations, so today we in the church have a godly head of the church who is the ultimate representation of God, and we are to follow him and collectively represent God to all people [see illustration].

† Ephesians 1.22 [NET]: *“And God put all things under Christ's feet, and he gave him to the church as head over all things.”*

