

Introduction:

The statement that human beings were created “*in the image and likeness of God*” is one of the most profound truths in Scripture. It sets humans apart from the rest of creation and defines our identity, purpose, and potential. But what exactly does this mean? To understand this, we need to look at both Scripture and sound theology.

1. Biblical Foundation:

Genesis 1:26-27 :

“Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion...’
So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.”

2. The Image of God – Our Inner Being (Imago Dei)

Definition:

Imago Dei refers to the unique spiritual, moral, intellectual, and relational nature that reflects aspects of God's character.

Core attributes include:

- Moral reasoning and conscience (Romans 2:14-15)
- Love and compassion (1 John 4:7-8)
- Creativity and dominion (Genesis 2:15)
- Free will and responsibility (Deuteronomy 30:19)
- Desire for relationship—with God and others (Genesis 2:18; Matthew 22:37-39)

Example from Scripture:

Ephesians 4:24 :

“And that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.”

This shows that righteousness and holiness are aspects of God's image that can be restored through spiritual rebirth.

3. The Likeness of God – Our Outer Form

While God is Spirit (John 4:24), the *likeness* aspect is often understood to refer to the fact that God chose to give humans a form that mirrors His own divine presence in some way.

Theophanies (God appearing in human-like form) in the Old Testament (e.g., Genesis 18:1-3, Exodus 33:11) suggest that God's heavenly form may have human-like qualities—eyes, hands, voice, etc.

Philippians 2:6-7:

“[Jesus], being in the form of God... took the form of a bondservant, and came in the likeness of men.”

This implies a divine form before incarnation that shares resemblance with humanity, reinforcing the concept of likeness.

What Does It Mean to Be Created in the Image and Likeness of God?

4. We Were Created to Reflect God's Character

Matthew 5:48 :

“Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.”

This is not a call to sinless perfection, but to spiritual maturity and godliness—becoming like God in character. God commands this because He knows it's possible through the transforming power of the Holy Spirit.

Romans 8:29:

“For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son...”

The image of God is fully revealed in Christ, and as believers, we are being shaped to become like Him.

5. How the Image Was Affected by Sin – and How It Is Restored

After the Fall (Genesis 3), humanity's ability to reflect God's image was corrupted—not destroyed. We still have the image, but it is marred.

Colossians 3:10:

“And have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him.”

2 Corinthians 3:18 :

“But we all... are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory...”

This transformation happens through faith in Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit.

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6. Animals and Creation Do Not Share This Image

Only humans were created in God's image. Animals, while part of God's good creation, do not bear moral responsibility or spiritual capacity.

Psalm 8:5-6:

“You have made him [man] a little lower than the angels...
You have made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands.”

This dominion is part of our God-given role that reflects His own sovereign rule.

7. Living Out the Image of God

We reflect God's image not by outward claims but by inward transformation that leads to righteous living.

Practical Example:

Before salvation, one may harbor hatred; but when filled with the Holy Spirit, love replaces hatred, and we begin to hate sin instead—just like God does.

Galatians 5:22-23:

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control...”

These fruits are the living expression of God’s image in us.

Being made in God’s image and likeness means we were designed to reflect His character, steward His creation, and enjoy a relationship with Him. This is our highest calling. Though sin distorted that image, Christ came to restore it. Through Him, and by the Holy Spirit, we are empowered to live as true image-bearers.

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May the Lord continue to transform us into His likeness as we walk with Him daily.

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