

Our Culture & Our Character

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6. Making an Image

Let us open the scriptures in Exodus Chapter 20:4-6 “Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.”

The knowledge of God in the context of sin, is given in the most simple and easy way, and God’s Law is an example of this. The Lord has always told us what is it that we have to do. He tells us WHAT we have to do, and our only answer is obedience. He says ‘What’. He says “Thou shalt not kill.” ‘What’. “Thou shalt not fornicate:” another ‘What’. “Thou shalt not bear false witness;” another ‘What’.

The Lord reveals His will in what we should not do. The education we receive in this world is not given like this. What we like to know is ‘why’ not ‘what’ and the Lord has spared us the ‘why’. He has given us something simple; ‘what’.

Here it says, “Thou shalt not make thee any graven image” or anything like it; that is a ‘what’. Before there were any advertisements—we should know what the principle is. But there is a reason here and it is very important that we know this reason. Why did the Lord say, “Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image”? It is a very simple reason—because the only One who makes real and true images is the Lord.

What is truth? In the last analysis, truth is the Lord. Truth is not a concept. Truth is a Person and that Person is He who made the heavens and the earth. And the only One who can make an image in truth, of truth, is Him. We cannot do it.

And He made the image alive, because Truth and Life are one thing. So it can be His image, it has to participate in God’s Life, and it has to participate of His character and then it is true. And Heaven knows that that which is not true—is harmful--destroys.

He is a true God and when He created the family; we know the verse—“Let Us make man in Our image according to Our likeness”. So the only One who makes a True Image, is the Lord.

Now, He gave us a faculty—He didn’t give it to the angels, He gave it to the human race—we can reproduce that image. It’s our job, and when there was no sin, there was only one image that we could copy—the image of God. But when sin entered, then we have another image, but it is a false image, it’s not real, it is distorted; and now we have the option of two images.

In prophecy we speak a lot about images, because there are beasts, and there is an image of the beast, and we know what the Image of the Beast is. The Image of the Beast is a copy of the character of the Beast; is a copy of the principles of the Beast.

After sin another image appeared, and we have the option—the True or the false. It is very important to us to be able to discern something about what is God's image. Four-thousand years later, the Jewish people and humanity had forgotten God's image, and the Lord needed to reveal Himself and He revealed Himself. He didn't send a book; He didn't send a philosopher; He didn't send a prophet; He Himself incarnated.

The apostle Paul tells us it is the same Image of God. Jesus, the Image of God; and we should be able to perceive what that is. The other day we shared with you how we have lost that. It is such a serious thing, to accept—at least to accept in faith—even though in my intellectual mind, I cannot conceive it—but by faith, I should accept my fellow man that he is the Image of God. And the only One who made it was Him.

How can we copy that? How can we copy it? The Lord has promised to reproduce Himself in us. And Heaven knows that the only One who can reproduce the Image of God, is Himself. He knows that we can't make copies. He knows it.

The enemy has tried to destroy this principle. And the effects—it is impossible to conceive the degenerative effects of this! In Romans 1, Paul explains this. Where does man end up when he loses the Image of God? Paul says it in Romans 1. In very clear language he defines it, and he did it two thousand years ago.

And here we are, two-thousand years after Paul, and what is the Image of God now? Destroyed! Man has changed the natural use according to nature, when man started making other images and lost the authentic image—that is the Lord.

Scriptures tell us in Genesis 9:5, 6; the Lord demands—“And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made He man.”

For the Lord, you and I are His image and His likeness, and the essence of that is not physical, it is moral, it is spiritual. And we don't manage moral values; we manage material values. We are children of material values. For us the most important is what we have. In our fallen and destroyed image, what is important is what we have.

In the Lord it is not important what we have. What is important to the Lord is what we are; because He is. But in order to be in this culture, to 'be' does not produce money in this culture. But if we have—that produces money. For us it is very difficult to discern the far-reaching effects of the second commandment.

The Lord gave us a work—Genesis chapter 1:27.28: “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth.”

The Lord gave us the ability to multiply His image and His likeness—the body and the spirit—just like He did it. And we don't understand the moral responsibility that is therein.

In Genesis 5:1 it is even more clear: “This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him;”

When the Lord made us, He made us in His own likeness; Verse 2 “Male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created.”

And in verse 3: “And Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and begat a son”

And how did he beget this son?

“In his own likeness.”

And the work, only in life, only in human beings, can this be done; Not on paper; not on wax; not on stone; not in iron—in people. Truth; real truth—not the appearance of truth—if it is an appearance—it’s not true; if it’s impure—it’s not true; if it’s unjust—it’s not true; because the essence of truth is moral. You don’t do that on paper—you do that in people.

“Thou shalt not make any graven image.”

“Thou shalt not make any graven image,” because God has made it, and He has given you the ability to do it, in the plurality of God’s Image.

God is plural. He said, “Let US make.” He didn’t say, “I am going to do. .” He said, “Let US make.” The original name of Elohiym, is plural. “Let us make.”

When He made the family, He did something plural and sin has destroyed that plurality in us. In what does that consist? The son does not live for himself. The Image of God in its moral essence is totally unselfish. Selfishness is something strange to God’s Image. The only thing that pertains to God’s image is Love. Love is an experience that is totally alterocentric (other centered).

The son—all the head of the son; all the chest of the son; all of the son’s stomach; the legs of the son; the faculties of the son—are not for the son—they are for the father. They are a gift; and that’s the principle of Love.

In Love, nothing is for the subject; everything is for another. All that pertains to the son was for the father; and everything that is in the father, is for the son. The father is a gift to the son—a total gift. We cannot conceive that in our imagination—it should be our experience, because there will be no stain or blemish of selfishness in the Kingdom of God.

The bond between the father and the son; the relationship that there is between the Father and the Eternal Son, is the foundation of the family.

The male—Adam—was a gift for Eve. The head of the male; the chest of the male; the resources of the male; all that the male had—was a gift for Eve; and in the same way, Eve for Adam; without any type of reclaiming. No reclaims; no demands; only a gift. It’s the moral Image of God. Who can reproduce that?

The Lord wants to do that in us, and that’s why He said, “Thou shalt not make thee any graven image.”

Now: Let’s go further. The principle of a plural life, in which I am not mine, I do not belong to myself; Paul said it—have you read it in the writings of Paul? 1 Corinthians 7:4: “The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife.”

In the Image of God, I am not mine and she is not hers, and we cannot imagine that. Our relationship in the Image of God is a relationship of depth and that depth is a depth of love. That is how God’s image is based. That is the base and the essence of the Plan of Redemption and that is why the Lord cannot conceive that His Image be destroyed—that His Image be destroyed.

And much less can He conceive that I as a father and that I as a mother will lend myself to destroy the image of God in a child; because the Lord says in the Commandments, Exodus 20:5: “for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting.”

Are we conscious that the Lord visits us? Are we conscious of that? Are we conscious that God visits the parents? Or do we think that this is just an idea—a concept? The Law of God teaches that He who made the heavens and the earth visits families and we don’t understand that much in this culture.

In this culture we like to have our privacy, so we visit on the phone. And when they call on the phone, we invented the answering machine and we hear the person and we let the machine register their voice. We are totally possessed by things.

But God is not like that—He visits us. He visits us, and when you visit someone, what do you perceive? What can we perceive? What can we see? What can we feel? What do we learn? What do we receive? We should be able to receive the Image of God. We should be able to receive the influence of the Divine character. We should be able to receive the redemptive treatment of God.

What has the Lord perceived in the visits in our home? Can He perceive? The Lord does not make a mistake when He perceives, and He has perceived my iniquity as a parent. He has perceived it and it hurts Him in His heart, because the Lord expects that each time that I look unto a child, in my eyes I will reflect the Image of God. In my words I will reflect the tone of God’s Image. In my behavior, in what I do, in my breath, the Lord expects that the influence of His character will be transmitted to the child.

And if that doesn’t happen, it’s another image. What other image? The image of the beast—there are only two images; God’s Image—the image of the Lamb; or the image of the beast.

Heaven says, “six things does the Lord abhor and seven are an abomination to His soul”. And the first one—you know which one it is—haughty eyes; haughty eyes. Do we speak with our eyes? Do we preach with our eyes? Do we love with our eyes? Can we hate with our eyes? Can we kill someone with our eyes?

And He visits us; and we destroy God’s Image and I destroy it in myself, but in me it is not so dangerous, but I destroy it in my children. I destroy it in my family. I destroy it with my wife. And on Sabbath I sing, “Hallelujah, Glory to God. Everything I have left”, and that’s Satan’s schizophrenic plan to destroy God’s image.

And we say, “Catholics—those who changed the law;” and what about us? Have we changed the Law? When will we restore the Image of God in our lives? Every instant, we need to reflect God’s image. That’s what we were created for, and according to Ellen White, what is education? The restoring of God’s image.

To educate is to redeem. What should your children be able to see in you? The Lord; the Lord. There was a song that you used to sing when you were Adventist children; I sang it. I was taught this song, and I suppose that you learned it before I did because all Adventist songs of fifty, sixty years ago, they were composed here in America.

“Oh be careful little eyes what you see. Oh be careful little ears what you hear. Oh be careful little mouth what you say. Oh be careful little hands what you do. For the Father up above, is looking down in love—Oh be careful little hands what you do!”

What a beautiful song! A beautiful song—it has a lot of meaning, but in reality, in practice—look what happens. We arrive to worship, and we do family worship. We talk

to the child about Jesus, and we tell him Jesus is love. Jesus is forgiveness. Jesus loves the meek. Jesus is humble. And that our children cannot get angry—they cannot get angry, they cannot be disobedient, because Jesus was not disobedient. Jesus is our example.

And we sing the song, “Oh be careful little eyes what you see. For the Father up above, is looking down in love—Oh be careful little eyes what you see! Oh be careful little mouth what you say, For the Father up above, is looking down in love—Oh be careful little mouth what you say!”

We finish worship and the father goes to the restroom, and he doesn't find a towel in the restroom, and he doesn't find soap in the restroom and so he gives out a cry, “Woman! What happened! There's no towel in here! There's no soap in here!” and our eyes are exalted and our voice is lifted—O be careful little mouth what you say!

Because what I say in worship—the image is different—what I do is different. What I do is different to the concept I am teaching, to the song I am teaching. The wickedness, the iniquity of the parents, over the children, is to show an image that is different from what I believe, from what I think, from what I feel, to what I live.

What is the result? A schizophrenic! And that's the devil's plan, to form schizophrenic children; because what we say, is different from what we are. What we believe and what we are—there is an abyss, and that abyss—the author of that pit—that distance—is Satan.

Have we broken the Second Commandment? We need to restore it! How can we restore it? In our character; in our life; in our being. Not with books. Not with figures.

I have perceived that there is one thing that is deadly with children, and even with old people. But before that, let me tell you something: In the child's nature, in the nature of every child that is born, there is a superlative faculty and the Lord gave us this faculty and woe unto him that destroys it! The Lord will not hold him innocent that destroys this!

Every child is born with the faculty of copying; the faculty of imitating. Why do your children speak English? Because Daddy speaks English. The Lord gave us the faculty of speech, but the language we learn by imitation. That's the way the Lord made us. The child, every child, is a sponge and he takes in, he absorbs and perceives, he imitates and he copies instantly—we were created like this. We were created to be transformed as we behold an image.

In education, my beloved, there is a principle that is fundamental—basic. What the child most needs, is an image; a model. And if the model is imperfect, the copy will be imperfect. Can we understand this? If we educate in this way, it's easy. The father copies the Lord, and the other is implicit and the child will copy it.

Where does a child learn to fight? Where does the child learn to contradict his Dad and his Mom? From hearing Mom and Dad contradict each other—it's the image. It's the image! We are transformed as we behold.

Who has destroyed God's Law? Who? Only the Catholic Church? Or we also have done it? And in the level of the home, and pretending to be Christian; my beloved, I have believed that what I have to do is to repent. Repent before the Lord, and repent before my family, and repent before my children, and say like the prodigal son, but not any more like a son, as a father, “Son, I have sinned against thee. I have sinned against God's Image. I haven't given you the example, I have not reflected what Jesus is at all

and you have copied another image. Forgive me my son! Let us help each other and let us pray for each other, that we might be able to reflect God's image in the home.

If we do not reflect this, brethren, we are breaking the Law; we are doing away with the Law, in the same commandment. And I believe, my brethren, that all of us need to repent, because the Lord says that He visits the iniquity of the fathers upon the children. To show that we are something different from God's Image—destroys children!

Many times we punish in our children what we have taught them with our example; with our influence; with our character; and that is terrible. And I have perceived, brethren, that children are born authentic. They want the truth. But we destroy that capacity to be authentic that the child brings when he is born.

In spite of our fallen condition, there is something of God's image still in us. The element of trust and the element of truth is an element that is implicit and we destroy it when we show another image and another spirit. It is very important for us to be able to discern in the distance what is this of the Image of God? This is a subject that we will never end, and the more you allow the Lord to show you this, you will be transformed because we are transformed as we behold.

Ellen White says that at least one hour everyday we should behold and contemplate the life of Christ. Our imagination—use our imagination, and she recommends that we should place ourselves in the last scenes of Christ's life. How did Jesus treat Herod? How did Jesus treat Pilate? How did Jesus treat Caiaphas? How did He treat Annas? How did He treat the centurion? How did He treat the soldiers? How did Jesus treat people in His last two weeks of life here on earth. How did He treat Peter? How did He treat Judas? How did He forgive? How did He understand? What did He live—the image of God in reality, here on earth, in flesh and bone.

That is what we have to copy. That is what we have to imitate and that is what is going to transform us from glory to glory. When our children will see that experience in us, Ellen White says our children will be converted. That is the job we have. What a job!

My beloved, God is Love and He gave as a new commandment, "that ye love one another even as I have loved you." Was it a new commandment? It was new—they knew the theory; they knew the meaning of the concept of love, but the experience of God's Love—they did not know it. Some of them were 'sons of thunder', and Peter wanted to be the first, he was selfish and the other one was greedy and a lover of money. They needed the New Commandment.

"Love one another as I have loved you."

And Jesus said; "Follow My example."

"Follow My example." And by faith we can follow that example. And we conclude, brethren, we can redeem our families, if we come down like Jesus. He didn't sin.

We have sinned; we have not shown our children His image. But if we descend, we come down and we go to the bed of our children, and we place our hand on their head, and we tell them, "My son, forgive me! Forgive me! I treated you with anger. I treated you with harshness. I was indifferent with you. I destroyed your trust. I did not receive you, I did not give you the communion that you needed. Oh, my son, forgive me, because I didn't treat you in God's image.

Oh my beloved, the Lord will forgive our iniquity, and He will justify our iniquity, and the Holy Spirit will do a work in these children, He will work in our wife and He will

do a work that we cannot measure, if we descend—if we go down, and we recognize that we have not shown God's image.

May the Lord help us. May He permit us to experience the image of God in our lives. That is the Plan of Redemption. That is what Heaven is doing, and that work does not cost us any money. It's a work of Grace; of Grace. And in Grace He gives us His image and His likeness. And in Grace we should give it to our fellow men.

Let us pray: Our Father which art in Heaven, as we look into Thy Law, we can only see Thy character, because Thou art the Law. Thou art the Torah. Thou art the Revelation. Thou hast revealed Thyself in Thy Word. Oh Lord, permit us to receive it in faith. May we be transformed into Thy image and Thy likeness. Lord forgive the transgression we have made of the Second Commandment. Only Thou canst give us Thy Grace. Only Thou canst give us Thy righteousness. Only Thou canst give us Thy Spirit, so we can reflect Thee here on earth.

Oh Lord, thank Thee for Thy Word! And thank Thee for the Lamb of God, because Thou hast faith that we can come to reflect Thy Image. In Jesus' name we beg Thee. In Jesus name—Amen!