

1Tim 24-03-03b

Let's resume our study here. And we're, we're looking in general at the incarnation of Jesus Christ and the application that we make in, in both the first and the seventh aspect of the mystery gospel revealed by Paul, because we are now his incarnation. And what is the image of God related to that? And it may seem a bit obscure in terms of where we're headed at the beginning, but like Perry Mason, your honor, I intend to tie these all together.

So the idea I would submit, I would suggest, I personally believe that the image of God mentioned in Genesis chapter one and in Genesis chapter five, and in by way of omission, it's Adam's image that's in chapter five. And then the image of God that's mentioned again in chapter nine, God's image has to do with dominion. And the image of God only existed with Adam and Eve in their perfected state in the garden.

And so, to have and bear and reflect the image of God, one needs the life of God, the presence of God, and the righteousness of God. Lacking that, the image isn't there. So you think about the image of God in scripture.

Turn to Exodus chapter 20, verse four. Exodus chapter 20, verse four. We're in the 10 commandments.

You remember Exodus 20 is one of the chapters we should remember like first Corinthians 13 and so on. But you remember this, you shall not make for yourself a carved image, any likeness of anything that is in heaven above or that is in the earth beneath or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or worship them for I the Lord your God am a jealous God punishing the children for the sins of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me.

But notice the context here. This, the Jews have never had any pictorial depictions of anything except what God specifically commanded. You have some imagery of cherubim and pomegranates and such in the making of the temple.

And you'd say, well, doesn't that violate God's own commandment that you would make these images? And Israel typically and we typically have a knee jerk response to things. And well, if it's talking about this, I'm just going to apply it to everything. There's nothing wrong with putting a face on a coin.

There's nothing wrong with having a depiction of an animal. You shall not make for yourself an image. And the idea of for yourself is make it for yourself to worship.

Don't make an image to worship. And that's clear in the next verse. Don't make an image for yourself in the form of anything in heaven, on the earth or in the waters below.

When they wove the curtains and decorations and made the lid for the Ark of the

Covenant, did they not make an image? Was Aaron's crime while Moses is up on the mountain receiving the law, making the golden calf, that he made a graven image? He hadn't even gotten the commandment yet, but did he somehow violate it in, you know, preemptively? Verse five makes it clear that you won't make an image of anything above, here or below to worship it, making it for yourself to worship. You shall not bow down to them or worship them. If you've never made them, why would bowing down and worshipping even be an issue, right? If God says, don't make any images, you ought to be done.

But he says, don't bow down to them or worship them. Images made for worship, idols, bulls, statues of angels, material things that you invest and imbue with being an image of God and therefore to be worshiped. The crime wasn't in making the golden calf, the crime was in worshipping the golden calf and saying, this is the God that brought us out of the land of Egypt.

When you go to that story, which is in the near context here, you shall not bow down to them or worship them. I, the Lord, your God, am a jealous God. Your attention in terms of viewing something as sacred needs to be directed to me, God says.

I am holy, I am to be worshiped. You shall have no other gods before me, the first commandment, no other gods before me. If you want to think of something as sacred, you look to me, I am righteousness and justice, love, eternal life, omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, immutability, unchangeable truth.

The Lord, the Lord, high and lifted up. So don't bow down, don't invest anything on the earth with sacredness, that which is to be worshiped is God and God alone, right? This is important, this is part of our context here. Look at Isaiah chapter 42, verse eight, Isaiah 42, eight.

I am the Lord, that is my name. I will not yield my glory to another or my praise to images, to idols. The reverence, the respect, the praise, the glory, the assigning of value and sacred identity belongs to God alone.

I am the Lord, that is my name. I am Yahweh, you can see Lord is in all caps there in your good new King James, that's the Tetragrammaton, that's Yahweh, that's God's covenant name to Israel. I am your Lord, I am your God, that is my name.

I will not yield my glory. You're not to treat other things as sacred and worthy of worship and attention and devotion and service that belongs to me alone. And I will not yield that God says.

This relates to the image of God, now, this idea that when the image of God is present on earth, it has the idea of dominion. Turn to 1 Corinthians 11, verse seven. This is a fascinating chapter.

This is the apostle Paul. Paul said, he begins this section saying, you are to imitate me just as I imitate Christ. Imitate me just as I also Christ.

You notice the second imitate is in italics there, it's there for clarity. I praise you brethren, you remember me in all things, you keep the traditions just as I delivered them to you. Once again, this is an indirect allusion to Paul's gospel.

You keep the teachings, the traditions that I delivered to you and you remember me delivering them to you. I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man and the head of Christ is God. What's he talking about here? Authority and dominion, right? Who has dominion over the Lord Jesus Christ? God the Father.

Who has dominion over the man? The Lord Jesus. We're talking about in the body of Christ. Who has dominion over the woman? The man, wife, husband, unmarried woman, ideally the father.

All of these things are in the ideal, in the divinely ordained order. Every man praying or prophesying, verse four, having his head covered dishonors his head. Who is his head? Christ.

Having his head covered is disrespectful to the Lord Jesus. But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head, her husband. That is one of the same as if her head were shaved.

It's one of the same as if she had no husband and she is her own authority. The hair here, the glory on the head represents the head in the same way that we as people reflect the glory of the Lord Jesus, because he is our head. The woman's long hair was a badge of her submission.

And if she shaved off that hair, that's what prostitutes did. No man's gonna tell me what to do. And to pray with your head uncovered, covering the head was a sign of respect and submission to the husband.

It's all the same as if her head were shaved. If a woman is not covered, let her be shorn. But if it is shameful for a woman to be shorn or shaved, let her be covered.

Why? Verse seven, a man indeed ought not to cover his head. Why? He is the image and glory of God, but woman is the glory of man. Do you see that the idea of order and authority and delegated structure is tied up with image of God? If Adam and Eve are all made in the image of God, how can Paul invoke the image of God here for the husband and not for the wife? Because that's not the issue in the image of God.

A man ought not to cover his head. He is the image and glory of God in the sense of fulfilling and expressing the delegated divine authority to ensure order, propriety, let

everything be done decently and in good order. This is why women were not to speak in the early church and exercise, will not suffer a woman to have authority over a man.

It upsets the order. This is desecrating the image of God in its proper sense to disregard God's ordained structure and the accountability that goes with it. Everybody that has responsibility needs authority to implement those responsibilities and they should be accountable for how they wield that authority and fulfill those responsibilities.

This is divinely ordained. It is godly. It is worship.

It is reflecting God's glory to be submissive to whatever authority is over you in your assigned spot. It isn't denigrating. It doesn't devalue.

It doesn't diminish. It doesn't depress a woman to be submissive to her husband any more than it denigrates, degrades, or diminishes a man to be submissive to Christ. Does it diminish, degrade, and dishonor Christ to be submissive to his father in heaven? Why would people invent this consequence for women and say, well, that's just an old archaic patriarchal, nonsensical thing, men just want to dominate.

The abuse of it can certainly be used to that end, but it's not a part of God's design. It is right and proper, and it reflects God's glory all up and down the chain. Everyone who submits themselves under the mighty hand of God is going to be exalted in due time.

And the mighty hand of God has put husbands as the responsible party in a marriage, and has put Christ as the responsible party in the body. This is why Jesus is going to preside at the judgment seat, judgment seat of Christ, because he is accountable for his body to the father. Those who are obedient, those who are compliant, those who have Jesus' words and keep them, the father's going to be pleased.

Jesus says, if you confess me before men, if you represent me before men, I will represent and confess you before my father who is in heaven. If you deny me, I will deny you. It's judgment based on the Lord Jesus' assignment as the head of men in the church.

This of course is a generality. What if you're unmarried? What if you're a widow? This is a picture. This is an ideal.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if everybody was 35 and married with small children and could fulfill all of the commands for a family? We're in different situations. There are all kinds. Some people are celibate.

Some people are childless. Some people never get married or get married more than once or whatever. This is a picture and it is designed to teach.

And when Paul invokes the image of God here, what is he talking about? This whole

passage is about authority and submission. Like the centurion, I have those who give me orders. I have those to whom I give orders.

I have a place in a structure. I say to one, come and he comes, and to another, go and he goes. And the centurion understood that Jesus had authority and he submitted himself to Jesus' authority.

He said, you don't even have to come under my roof. You can say the word. And I know that my servant slash son will be healed.

And Jesus shook his head and said, why isn't this faith present in Israel? I haven't seen faith like this among my own people who ought to know better. This centurion, this Roman Gentile gets it. And on the basis of that faith and that understanding, Jesus blessed him with complete and total healing for that afflicted person in his household.

So this passage is critical. Verse seven, man ought not to cover his head. He is the image and glory of God, but woman is the glory of man.

So woman does cover her head, man does not. Why? Because the man is the highest form of physical dominion on the earth. The Lord Jesus isn't here physically, except in and through the church.

So the man is the image now. He is what Christ was. Now think about this.

Second Corinthians four, three and four. Christ, the glorious, if our gospel is hid, hid to those who are lost, God of this world has blinded their minds, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God. Christ is the image of God.

When you look for the image of God, where do you find it? Jesus Christ. Christ is the image of God. If our gospel is hid, that glorious good news of Christ, who is the fullness of deity and bodily form, he is the image of God.

Now, how can you say that the worst reprobate, felonious, criminal, selfish, godless, pagan, rascal on the earth somehow has the image of God, then what does it mean that Christ is the image of God? If everybody's the image of God, you're denying the uniqueness of Christ. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. Look at Hebrews chapter one, verse three.

I think Paul wrote Hebrews, as you know. I think he wrote it specifically to an audience and it changed his vocabulary. But God at various times, various ways, spoke in times past to the fathers by the prophets.

In these last days, he has spoken to us by his son, whom he has appointed heir of all things, through whom he also made the worlds. Notice the dominion aspect of the Lord Jesus. He is the heir, he is the originator, and he is the inheritor.

Verse three, who being the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person. Jesus Christ is the express image of God. And what does he do? He upholds all things by the word of his power.

He exercises authority and dominion and control and judges. That is the expression of his image of God. God the Father has delegated this so that you may know that the son of man has power on earth to forgive sins.

I say to you, rise, take up your bed and walk. Delegated authority from God. He is the brightness of glory and the express image of his person, upholding all things by the word of his power.

When he had by himself purged our sins, he sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high, having become so much better than the angels as he has by inheritance, obtained a more excellent name than they. Jesus Christ is the express image of his person and the reflection of his glory. He is the brightness of the father's glory.

Hebrews 1.3. Colossians 1.15. Notice that at least in my book, these are all statements by the apostle Paul. You should have 2 Corinthians 4.3 and 4. Hebrews 1.3, Colossians 1.15. What does Paul say? The son is the image of the invisible God. The son is the image of God, the firstborn over all creation.

Notice the association of the image with authority. He's the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. When you have the image, you have the authority structure that God has ordained.

Remember in the gospel of John, John 1.18, "No one has ever seen God, but the one and only son who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the father has made him known." That's the NIV translation. Our new King James says, "No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten son who is in the bosom of the father, he has declared, he has revealed." Looking at him, you are able to see the glory of God.

John 14, verse 9. John 14, this of course is the upper room. Jesus answering Philip, don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the father. If you've seen me, you've seen the father.

How can you say, show us the father? I think I recently ascribed that question to Thomas, but it's Philip here. If you've seen me, you've seen the father. Why? He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.

He is the express image of his person, the reflection of his glory. If you've seen me, you have seen that aspect of the father. So how can you say, show us the father? You're looking, and if you go on to verse 10, "Do you not believe that I am in the father and the father is in me?" So for someone to see the image of God, they have to ultimately be seeing some version, some reflection, some expression of the father.

Jesus says to Philip in verse 10, "'Do you not believe that I am in the father and the father is in me?' The words I say to you, I don't speak on my own. Instead, it is the father dwelling in me, performing his works, doing his work. "'Believe me when I say, I am in the father and the father is in me.' And you know that by believing the evidence of the works themselves." Transfer that one level down.

If we have the indwelling Christ and we are in him, and you think about the high priestly prayer, Jesus reiterates that he is in the father. If we are in Christ and Christ is in the father, then we are in the father and the father is potentially in us and God's works are accomplished. And the works that are done in us, not by us, the works that are done in us by the grace and the power of God are a reflection of God's power.

God is at work in you to will and to do for his good pleasure, his purpose, his glory. God accomplishes these. So where is the image of God today? Is it in every man? And therefore everyone is to be treated as having a sacred spark, having something sacred that means we should treat them the way we should fulfill all of the one another commands, that the one another's apply to everyone because there is the imago dei, there is the spark of divine presence and image.

That is not what I find in my Bible. The imago dei has been a teaching for hundreds of years. And I think it has been misunderstood because the connection to function in the authority structure has been overlooked.

It is always present. When you find the image of God, you find being firstborn over all creation. You find being the head of the woman.

You find that Christ as the head of the man and men are in charge on this earth and we are accountable to the Lord Jesus. He is the head of the man. This is the authority structure.

The head of Christ is God. Why does Paul even include that? Because the image of God goes to the Lord Jesus. And to the extent that the Lord Jesus is present in us, we begin to recover this image.

So you have Philippians chapter two, verse six. You remember Philippians two. This is Jesus did not think equality with God a thing to be grasped.

Being in the very nature of God, he did not consider equality with God something to be held onto. He emptied himself and took on the form of a servant and came in the likeness of men, likeness of men and being found in appearance as a man. And you have the distinction of the image and likeness of man.

Adam bears, gives, is the father of Seth in his image and likeness. We bear the image of the earthly. Paul says, one day we will bear the image of the heavenly.

We'll be getting to that. So if you wanna have three points on the image of God, the first one is the image of God seems to be regularly associated with the concept of authority and dominion, not value so that to take a human life is to desecrate the image of God. It is associated with dominion.

And judging in Genesis chapter nine, those who have shed man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed. This is a reflection and an implementation of the image of God, the image for subduing and controlling what happens on the earth. Both animals and men, if they shed men's blood, they are to be executed.

Their blood shall be shed because man is made in God's image and you are now the arbiters and the judges and the implementers of that justice. The fullness of the image of God is found in Christ, not in all mankind. And we saw this, this is our second point.

I've given you the verses, second Corinthians four, three and four, Hebrews, Colossians, John and Philippians. Now the third point. So if everybody's not made in the image of God, then when do we get associated with the image of God? The image of God doesn't exist in us by default or by human birth.

It is renewed in us through Christ, who is the image of God. This is Colossians 3.10, Colossians 3.10, which begins, seeing then that you have been raised with Christ. That's how the chapter begins.

You are identified with Christ in his death, burial and resurrection. And verse 10 says, you have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge or by knowledge in the image of its creator. If you don't get any other verse, be sure and get this one.

We have put off the old man with his passions and lusts. We have put on the new man who is renewed by means of knowledge. If you don't have knowledge, if you don't have the words of Christ, you're not going to be renewed.

Romans 12, one and two. I beseech you by the mercies of God, do not be conformed to the world, do not continue to live as the old man. Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.

The washing of water by the word, cleansed, transformed, renewed. This is why we are a Bible church. This notion of, oh, you're a bibliolater, you're worshiping the scriptures is nonsense.

I enjoy talking to Patty on the phone. I'm not worshiping my phone. I'm not enjoying a relationship with my phone.

The phone is the means by which I can talk to my loved ones. The scriptures are the means by which God talks to me and I can pray back that truth. And this squirrely notion that if you are serious about Bible study, you're some sort of a scripturaliter is a very

abusive, unkind and erroneous charge.

Nobody who makes that charge has ever actually come to know Christ through the study of the scriptures and has come to appreciate the Father and understand the power of the Holy Spirit. People who make that charge literally don't know what they're talking about. Show me the Father without the scriptures.

Explain to me the Lord Jesus Christ without the scriptures. All scripture is God-breathed and profitable, right? So we are renewed by knowledge, in knowledge, through knowledge. This is the instrumental of knowledge, in, by or with.

All of those meanings apply. Colossians 3.10, we have put on the new man who is renewed in, by, with knowledge according to the image of him who created him, according to the image of the creator, the image of God. The image of God is renewed in us through the new man that we become in Christ.

Any man be in Christ, he's a new creation. Old things have passed away, all things have become new. What does that say about someone who is not in Christ or someone who has accepted Christ as their savior, but they are not being renewed in knowledge.

They're not being transformed by the renewing of the mind. You can be a believer and be reprobate, be, you know, the Baptists say backslid. You can be sitting on the sidelines, unengaged, not availing yourself of the eternal life Christ died to give us, not enjoying its blessings, not being transformed and energized.

And God is not in us to will and to do his good purpose because the image is not there, because the image is renewed in knowledge. The image of God begins to be restored and renewed and to show forth God's glory by knowledge in Christ, the new man, that's Colossians 3.10. The image of God, I would argue from scripture is not ubiquitous and does not characterize every human being, that is just wrong headed. And the idea of pursuing social justice and abstract charity, because everybody's got the image of God, everybody deserves some sort of honor and partakes of some sort of sacredness because they are made in God's image.

I can't find it in scripture. You really have to excise verses out of their context to make that fly. And it doesn't even fly then.

That's flying like Snoopy's dog house. You can sit on top and think you're flying, but you're not. This is Colossians 3.10. Look at 2 Corinthians 5.17. 2 Corinthians 5.17. This is such an important truth.

It is directly connected to the incarnation of Jesus Christ, because he is the one who reflects it. And to the extent that we partake of Christ and represent him and are his new incarnation in this age, in the new covenant, to that extent, we partake of the image of God. This says, if anyone be in Christ, he is a new creation.

I really think they mess this up. In the NIV, it says, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come. Look at your new King James, which helpfully puts what is not there in italics.

If anyone in Christ, a new creation. Anyone in Christ, that's a new creation. That's something new.

Old things are passed away. Look, all things are new. This is a new representation, implementation, presence of the image of God in Christ.

Renewed in knowledge, having his words and keeping them. All of these are part of the same fabric. We've already seen Paul talking in Ephesians about this concept, but turn back to Ephesians chapter four.

Ephesians chapter four. It doesn't get any clearer than this. Ephesians four, beginning at verse 20.

This is gonna be Ephesians 4, 20 through 24. 4, 20 through 24. Be sure and get these down.

You'll want to go back and search the scriptures and see that these things are so. Paul says, the life characterized by walking as the Gentiles do, verse 17, in the futility of their thinking, they are darkened in their understanding and alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardness of their hearts. They're ignorant.

The light of the gospel doesn't shine to them because lack of interest, lack of faith, lack of transformation by knowledge. No longer walk like the Gentiles. Don't do that.

That thinking is futile. Anything an unbeliever can do, my old pastor used to say, is not the Christian way of life. If an unbeliever can do it, that's not God.

That's not the image of God. Alienated from the life of God, the productive presence and power and reflected glory of God because of the ignorance that is in them, and they're ignorant because they've hardened their hearts. Having lost all sense of shame, they have given themselves over to feeling good and the practice of every kind of impurity with a craving for more.

This is not the way you came to know Christ. Surely you heard of him and were taught in him in keeping with the truth that is in Jesus to put off your former way of life, your old self, the old man, which grows corrupt in the deceitfulness of lust and to be renewed in the spirit of your mind and that you put on the new man which is created according to God. Now we're back to the image of God there in verse 24.

If you've heard Christ and been taught by him, this is why the words of Christ are so important. Paul emphasizes as a part of his gospel of the mystery, you've got to be

taught by Christ. You have to have his words and keep them so that he comes and dwells in you.

If you've heard him, heard him, Paul doesn't even say if you've heard me and been taught by me. He says, you learned Christ. You've heard him and been taught by him.

The truth is in Jesus. Paul affirms this. He's not separating doing something different than Jesus.

He is emphasizing the truth that is in Jesus. Put off concerning your former conduct, the old man that grows corrupt according to deceptive desires and they're well-intentioned. I just want everybody to be happy.

I don't want little children to suffer and starve and be blown to bits by bombs. And I have empathy and sympathy. I want the world to be a great place.

I want everybody to be happy and healthy and productive and prosperous. I want this. It is a deceptive desire if you're worried about the wellbeing of people instead of the approval of God.

Nothing wrong with hoping everybody is okay. But if you are led astray by a deceptive desire, a deceitful lust, it will corrupt us. We will no longer be on the narrow road heading through the straight gate.

You've got to put off. Any unbeliever can do that. Any unbeliever can feel sorry for people and chump money into a pot and say, please go send rice to these starving people.

There's nothing intrinsically wrong with that. It isn't the action that constitutes righteousness for everyone. It is not what is done.

It's why it is done. Why? What are the thoughts and intents of the heart? If you have a deceitful desire and it isn't, I want to glorify God in my body, in my life. Verse 23, Ephesians four, be renewed in the spirit of your mind.

Put on the new man created in the image of God, created according to the pattern, the standard of God. The new man recovers the image of God, Ephesians 4, 24. That's where the image of God returns.

It was lost in the garden. It returns in Christ. Makes sense, doesn't it? He is the image of the invisible God.

Christ formed in us is the hope of glory, reflecting God's glory, being a part of God's glory, communicating, implementing God's glory. Be renewed, put on the new man created according to God in true righteousness and true holiness. That is true righteousness, not to support and attempt to perpetrate social justice.

Those same things may happen. We may still end up supporting the weak and the helpless and the impoverished and the deprived and the oppressed, but we do it God's way, in God's time. God's assignment of who is my neighbor.

God's glory is reflected it because we are doing it to please God, not to accomplish a social goal or change an earthly circumstance for its own sake. And declaring that to be righteousness. Here's a hungry person.

I gave them something to eat. I am righteous. The action is neither righteous nor unrighteous.

It's what's going on in the heart. From the heart flows both righteousness and sin. Jesus tried to make this point during his earthly ministry.

What flows out of the heart is what is determinative in wickedness or righteousness. The heart has to be renewed and transformed in the image of the creator. So we put off the old self.

Romans 8, 29. You remember Romans 8, 28? All things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew, he predestined to what? To salvation? Those that God knew before were going to come to faith and be entered into the body of Christ.

This is Romans, this is Paul. Those whom God foreknew, he predestined to what? To be conformed to the image. The image of his son.

If everybody's got the image of God, why do we need to be conformed to the image of Christ? The destiny of those who come to faith in this age is the potential to be conformed to the image of his son so that he, Christ, might be the firstborn among many brethren. The image. Over and over again, the image of God is associated with the Lord Jesus Christ and Christ formed in us.

1 Corinthians 15, 49. Once you see this, you can't unsee it. It starts jumping off the page in all of these passages.

You remember 1 Corinthians 15? This is the resurrection chapter, right? This is where Paul talks about if Christ be not raised, you are yet in your sins and so on. Just as we have borne the image of the earthly man, Seth, born in the image and likeness of Adam, so shall we bear the image of the heavenly man. We start out in Adam's image.

The goal is to be renewed and recreated in Christ's image, the image of God. Again, 1 Corinthians 15, 49. 2 Corinthians 3, 15 through 18.

And we'll close with this. You could go to Romans 6, 6. Our old self is crucified with its desires. Old self, new self, old man, new man.

Paul talks about this. Just put down Romans 6, 6. You can look at it. We're gonna close with 2 Corinthians 3, 15 through 18.

When Moses is read to the Jews, a veil covers their hearts. Whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. The Lord is spirit.

Where the spirit of the Lord is, there's freedom. We all with unveiled face behold the Lord's glory are being transformed into his image. We're not born with it.

We view his glory with an unveiled face. The glory of God is in the face of Jesus Christ. We behold the Lord's glory and we are being transformed into his image with ever increasing glory, which comes from the Lord who is the spirit.

How important is it for us to understand where the image of God is and where it isn't? If we are deceived into diverting our attention and our focus and our efforts and our standard of righteousness and what constitutes a worthy and worthwhile life and stewardship of our time and resources, if we are diverted into pouring that into areas that are not a part of the plan and purpose of God in the mistaken belief, the deceiving notion that everyone is made in the image of God and all are worthy of being the target of every one another command in the New Testament, we will be completely neutralized, completely distracted, completely deceived. Be not deceived. And you inevitably end up sowing to the flesh, sowing to the world, trying to make the world a better place, trying to reflect kingdom values by changing circumstances instead of becoming kingdom people.

One of the things Elizabeth and I were talking about this yesterday, when you look at the Beatitudes, the Jesus follower, dissident disciple, progressive deconstruct, reconstruct folks, which are swaths, hundreds of thousands, if not millions of believers are following this path, always wanna go back to the Sermon on the Mount in general and the Beatitudes in particular, and say, you've got to make these happen in society. You've got to be a peacemaker. You've got to sympathize with the poor.

You have to be prophetic and call out people's sins so that you can be persecuted like the prophets were before you. And these things that are in the Beatitudes, look at the Beatitudes. It doesn't say blessed are those who implement justice in society.

Blessed are those who make peace in society. These are not actions to be performed on others. They are transformations of a person.

Jesus doesn't call people to bring in the kingdom. He calls them and us to become kingdom people. Be a kingdom person.

Blessed are the poor in spirit. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst. Blessed are those, it is individuals who have this heart.

They are qualified. Theirs is the kingdom. He doesn't say they're making the kingdom.

They're expressing the kingdom. They're building the kingdom. They're communicating the kingdom.

They possess it. They own it. They're entering into the image of God and they will rule and reign with Christ because they bear his image, which is renewed in knowledge and reflects his glory.

So many implications of this on what our focus needs to be. We want the image of God to be renewed within us and to properly exercise our responsibilities and our assigned functions in the structure that God has ordained, honoring our head and being honorable as a head. That's our goal.

So much practical value in these truths. And so we will pick this up, looking at the implications. How should we then live based on the revelation of the mystery as it is given in Paul's unique gospel? We'll see that coming up this coming Wednesday.

We'll close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for the truth of your word, its clarity, its power, the grace that is manifest to us through it. We thank you for the presence of your Holy Spirit, his guiding influence, the leading and the understanding that he provides to us as we contemplate and think about the meaning and purpose of these things in terms of how we can apply them in our own lives.

We pray that these truths will be transformative for us, that your image will be ever more fully recovered and restored and reflected within us so that we can be the body of Christ and accomplish your purposes through him and through us until the day that you send the Lord Jesus to take us to himself and present us before your throne. We pray these things in Jesus' name, amen.