

97-09-07b Genesis Chapter 1 vs 26-31 Man in God's Image Custom

...story of the Philistines and what they try to do with the Ark in 1 Samuel chapter 6. And you have them being afflicted with all kinds of diseases. Their fish god falls and gets his hands and neck broken and so forth, and so they keep sending the Ark to somewhere else in the Philistine Empire. Well, let's send it over to here and let's send it over to there.

And every place it goes, bad things happen. And pretty soon, the whole region is afflicted with tumors, these horrendous growths that appear on their bodies, and this terrible blight of physical disease hits them. And they're overrun with rats and mice and their grain and crops and all the attendant disease that comes along with that.

And so they're trying to figure out what to do, and they say, well, what we'll do is, let's send this thing back to the Israelites and let's offer an offering. And so they say, in their pagan ideas of worship, it was common to make an image of the thing that you're trying to purge out of the land. So they make images of the rats and the tumors out of gold and send these back to Israel accompanying the Ark.

They put it on a new cart and they let the ox go that's driving it with its calf and so on, and it wanders back to Israel under God's direction. But the idea we're focusing on in 1 Samuel 6 is these images of the rats and the tumors. The word used there is tzelem.

It's a representation. It's a model. It's an outline, a casting, if you will, of the tumor.

Can't imagine what that would look like. And the rats, little creature with a tail and ears and a nose and so forth, they made these out of gold and sent them back with the Ark. And these are referred to as tzelem in 1 Samuel 6, 5 and again in 6, 11.

And this is a word commonly translated nine or ten times in the Old Testament. It is translated idol. The theological word book of the Old Testament, which is sort of a magnum interpretive dictionary put together by some of the foremost Hebrew scholars in the world like Bruce Waltke, says that tzelem is image, specifically image as a representation of deity.

This is its basic function, its basic meaning in the Old Testament. It's an image that represents deity. And this is important because as such, an image that is a representation of a deity, this is what's forbidden in the Ten Commandments.

Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image. It's not no sculpture, no physical representation of a thing, which is what it came to mean quickly in Israel. But this means no idol.

We know, for example, in the tabernacle and on the Ark of the Covenant itself and in the

curtains of the tabernacle, there were woven images and there were golden cherubim, physical representations of heavenly creatures. And if God had said, don't make any graven image, they could have never finished the Ark of the Covenant because it's got these two big cherubs on the top. They are woven into the fabric of the curtains, their image.

And he says, thou shalt not make any graven image. Well, what about the pomegranates and the other representations in the seven-branched menorah and so forth? That wasn't what God had in mind in the Second Commandment. It is an image, it's a *tselim*, it's an image that represents a deity that is viewed as being the shadow or the representation of some imagined God or even God himself.

We're not to set up a golden calf and say, this is the God that brought us out of the land of Egypt, as the Israelites did right there at the foot of the mountain. Turn with me to Psalm 8. This is a very well-known, familiar psalm. You can scan down through the first few verses there, but look at verse 5. He starts in verse 4, What is man that you are mindful of him, or the son of man that you visit him? For you have made him a little lower than the angels.

You have crowned him with glory and honor. You have made him to have dominion over the works of your hands. You have put all things under his feet.

This is the idea of image of God. It is the idea of dominion. It's the idea of representation.

The things that God created through his own voice, the works of his own hand, he has put under man's authority. Man is to stand in, if you will, for God in terms of rulership and dominion over these things. He has been crowned with glory and honor.

This is the glory and honor that attach to God. You have this same idea in Deuteronomy chapter 4, verse 15 through 19. Deuteronomy 4, 15 through 19.

Take careful heed to yourselves, for you saw no form when the Lord spoke to you at Horeb out of the midst of the fire, lest you act corruptly and make for yourselves a carved image in the form of any figure, the likeness of male or female, the likeness of any animal that is on the earth, or the likeness of any winged bird that flies in the air, the likeness of anything that creeps on the ground, or the likeness of any fish that is in the water beneath the earth. And take heed, lest you lift your eyes to heaven, and when you see the sun, the moon, and the stars, all the hosts of heaven, you feel driven to worship them and serve them, which the Lord your God has given to all the peoples under the whole heaven as a heritage. Reference back to our fourth day.

This is the idea implicit in the passage, is don't make an image that you are going to worship, that you're going to view as being the *Salem* of a deity. Well, we'll pause here and take our break, and when we come back we'll contemplate briefly what that means

when it says that we are the Selem of God himself. Let's pause here and take our break.