

HC 97-98 – May we make images and paintings of Jesus?

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: You have heard you must worship God in the way he commands. He did not leave it up to your imagination to decide how to worship him. He did not ask for what you think is best.

But there is one nagging issue regarding how to worship God that has plagued Christianity for hundreds of years: The use of images to worship God. Many worship God using images because they think it is better to do so.

What does God say? Hear today:

Our headings are:

It is impossible to make an image of God

It is incorrect to make an image of God

It is illogical to make an image of God

What is the alternative to using images to worship God?

Our goals are: That as Christians, you **will not in any way corrupt worship of God**, the one who adopted you through his Son's blood.

It is Impossible to Make an Image of God

97 Q. MAY WE THEN NOT MAKE ANY IMAGE AT ALL?

A. God **can not** and **may not** be visibly **portrayed in any way**. Although creatures may be portrayed, yet God forbids making or having such images if one's intention is to worship them or to serve God through them.

1. It is impossible to make an image of the Son of God because no man knows what Jesus looked like.

To do so is to break the 9th command – to bear false witness.

But **from where did we get that popularly used picture of Jesus?** Michelangelo! He painted it 1500 years after Jesus came. It was probably a painting of **Ceasare Borgia** that he altered. **Borgia was a wicked Cardinal around 1500 in Italy.**

Further, we have no pictures of what Jesus looked like. Historical records put him as short, darker, and not so good looking. The average height of the time was 5' 1" and the average weight was 110lbs.

Michelangelo didn't even do his research correctly. So he created an image of a white, tall, hippy-like, and handsome man and called him Jesus. Would you want

someone to create a picture of your child that totally changes her looks? Even Glamour Shots only removed blemishes! Not so here.

1Timothy 6:16 - who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, **whom no man has seen or can see**, to whom be honor and everlasting power. Amen.

It is incorrect to make an image of God

1. Even if it were possible to have a good picture or painting of Jesus, it would be wrong to do so.

Deuteronomy 4:15 "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, 16 **"lest you act corruptly and make for yourselves a carved image** in the form of any figure: the likeness of male or female,

2. It is wrong to use of images of Jesus to help people worship God.

So when Israel started using Nehushtan to aid in their worship of Jehovah, Hezekiah was instructed to tear down that image, and crush it to little pieces.

2Kings 18:4 He removed the high places and broke the sacred pillars, cut down the wooden image and broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made; for until those days the children of Israel burned incense to it, and called it Nehushtan. 5 He trusted in the LORD God of Israel, so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor who were before him.

Can a woman say: I'm with another man so I can think of my husband?

3. It is wrong to even make images of other humans if the goal is to worship those images.

So lighting incense in front statues to social, political, or religious leaders is forbidden. They aren't gods!

It is Illogical to make an Image of God

1. It is illogical to make images of God because idols are dumb, while God is not.

So those who make idols of God or other humans or animals to worship are themselves foolish.

Jeremiah 10: 7 Who would not fear You, O King of the nations? For this is Your rightful due. For among all the wise men of the nations, and in all

their kingdoms, there is none like You. 8 But they are altogether **dull-hearted and foolish; A wooden idol is a worthless doctrine.**

Isaiah 44:14 He cuts down cedars for himself, And takes the cypress and the oak; He secures it for himself among the trees of the forest. He plants a pine, and the rain nourishes it. 15 Then it shall be for a man to burn, For he will take some of it and warm himself; Yes, he kindles it and bakes bread; Indeed **he makes a god** and worships it; He makes it a carved image, and falls down to it.

Romans 1:22 Professing to be wise, **they became fools**, 23 and changed the glory of the incorruptible **God into an image made like corruptible man**—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.

Idol worshippers have to care for idols; idols can't care of the worshippers. Why worship something that can't take care of itself? Worship someone who can take care of you!

2. It is illogical to make images of God because making idols of God would provoke him.

Psalm 78:58 For **they provoked Him to anger with their high places**, And moved Him to jealousy with their carved images. 59 When **God heard this, He was furious, And greatly abhorred Israel,**

God is a jealous God. Jealousy is a sign of care. Jealousy is often translated “zealous”.

God is zealous for his bride's affections.

Exodus 34:14 '(for you shall worship no other god, for the LORD, **whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God**),

God has exclusive right to possess Israel and to claim her love and allegiance for himself. No one would want to have his wife become a prostitute. **The wife who truly loves her husband will show it!**

3. It is illogical to make images of God because doing so would endanger your family, church, and state.

To do so is to have a death wish! Jeroboam, the 1st king of *divided* Israel, made idols of Yahweh and set them up for the people to use in Bethel and Dan. **Jeroboam did not show a personal hatred of God,** rather, he **made these idols as representative of Yahweh,** but in so doing endangered all Israel.

1Kings 12:26 And Jeroboam said in his heart, "Now the kingdom may return to the house of David: 27 "If these people go up to offer sacrifices in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, then the heart of this people will turn back to their lord, Rehoboam king of Judah, and they will kill me and go back to Rehoboam king of Judah." 28 Therefore the king asked advice, made two calves of gold, and said to the people, "It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Here are your gods, O Israel, which brought you up from the land of Egypt!" 29 And he set up one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan. **30 Now this thing became a sin, for the people** went to worship before the one as far as Dan.

What is the alternative to using images to worship?

98 Q. BUT MAY NOT IMAGES BE PERMITTED IN THE CHURCHES AS TEACHING AIDS FOR THE UNLEARNED?

A. No, we shouldn't try to be wiser than God. **He wants his people instructed by the living preaching of his Word**—not by idols that cannot even talk.

1. The alternative to making and worshiping idols of God...even idols that aid the worship of Jehovah...is preaching the living Word of God!

2Peter 1:18 And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. 19 And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which **you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place**, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts;

Someone might ask: "Why can't we use pictures of Jesus to teach our children?

We aren't worshipping the picture." God forbids it, but more, **God has given us a better way to learn of Jesus: The living preaching of the Word of God.**

Others might argue their image (drawings) for teaching children is 2-dimensional instead of 3 dimensional, so that is not really an image.

Answer: You are **not to make any form of God**. Look at it!

Exodus 20:4 "**You shall not make for yourself a carved image**, or 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; 5 **you shall not bow down** to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous

God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me,

Two or three-dimensional makes no difference to God.

2. So preach about God with passion and teach it in all its richness and fullness, in purity and power.

Preach to your children! Tell them of God's goodness and glory with all the delight that is derived from them. Tell them how excited and blessed you are as a redeemed child of King Jesus. Let them know all of this good news is wrapped up in Yahweh's love letter to his people – the Bible.

They should love to read and mediate on God's Word and learn of him.

Romans 10:14 How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? 15 And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!" 17 **So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.**

Will showing pictures of Jesus bring faith?

3. Those who say we need pictures to teach our children are attacking the sufficiency of the Word of God. They are saying God's Word is not enough and we need to supplement it with our own ideas.

Would you want to tell the Lord his Word is not sufficient for you?

2Timothy 3: 16 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, 17 **that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.**

Conclusion:

It is impossible to make an image of God.

It is incorrect to make an image of God.

It is illogical to make or worship an image of God.

Those images are created material and it is sinful to reduce God to created material.

To do this would endanger your soul and the soul of your family – even if you only use these things to help you worship.

Instead, Christians are to use the **living teaching of God’s word to lead men to Christ.**

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus:

1. Make every effort to carefully, lovingly, and passionately teach the Word of God to your children and those around you (introducing them to Yahweh) so they may come to know and have faith in Jesus.

2. While pictures may help you to read a human story, they don’t help in the story of Christ.

Pictures and images of God confuse the mind and reduce God to created things. God is a Spirit.

Worship him in spirit.

3. God does not want your worship to be according to what you think is best.

You are to remember you belong to him, body and soul.

He shed his blood for you.

You must therefore worship him the way he says...and only in that way.

Finally, a clear understanding of God’s Word is fundamental to trusting in Christ for salvation. If you are not a Christian, you need to read God’s Word so you can see how sinful you are, you can see your need for Christ, and you can see how you can come to receive his benefits. Nothing else would do. Will you do this today?