

God's Self-Portraits

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What does God look like?

- Humans were created in God's image.
- This image was distorted, but not destroyed, by our rebellion.
- As a result, we tend to make for ourselves gods in our (distorted) image.
- God wants us to know what He is really like, so He has provided us images of Himself in the Bible.



God's Pictures of Himself

- Potter
- Farmer
- Shepherd
- King
- Master
- Father
- Husband

God as Potter

- As a potter makes clay pots, so God made us.
- As clay pots are fragile, so are we.
- As a potter makes pots for various purposes, so God has made us.





God as potter made us

“We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand.” – Isaiah 64:8

“Woe to him who quarrels with his Maker, to him who is but a potsherd among the potsherds on the ground. Does the clay say to the potter, ‘What are you making?’ Does your work say, ‘He has no hands?’” – Isaiah 45:9



We are fragile like clay pots

“Your hands shaped me and made me. Will you now turn and destroy me? Remember that you molded me like clay. Will you now turn me to dust again?” – Job 10:8-9

“You will rule them with an iron scepter; you will dash them to pieces like pottery.” – Psalm 2:9



God makes us for a purpose

“In a large house there are articles not only of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay; some are for noble purposes and some for ignoble. If a man cleanses himself... he will be an instrument for noble purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work.” – 2 Timothy 2:20-21

God as Farmer

- The righteous are pictured as a healthy tree.
- The wicked are pictured as various sorts of endangered plants.
- God's grace is pictured as ingrafting.





Righteous as healthy tree

“He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither.” – Psalm 1:3

“The righteous will flourish like a palm tree, they will grow like a cedar of Lebanon... They will still bear fruit in old age, they will stay fresh and green.” – Psalm 92:12,14



Wicked as endangered plant

“Not so the wicked! They are like chaff that the wind blows away.” – Psalm 1:4

“The axe is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.” –
Matthew 3:10



God's grace as ingrafting

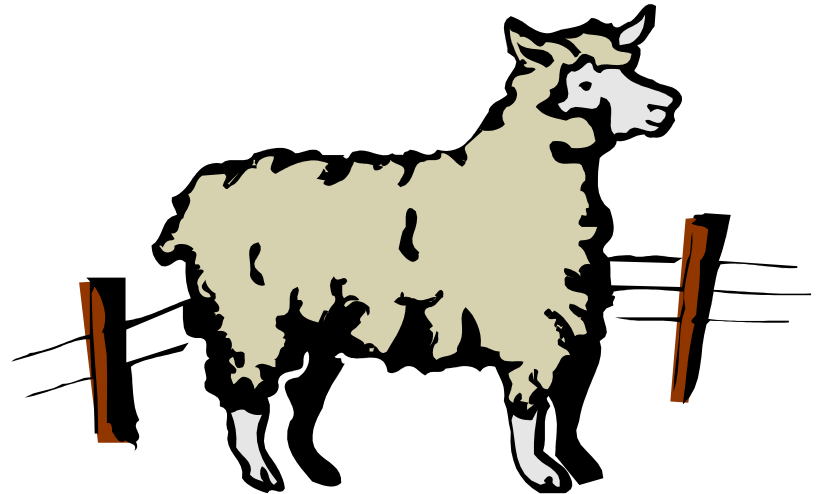
“If some of the branches have been broken off, and you, though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root...” –
Romans 11:17

“And if they do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again.” – Romans 11:23



God as Shepherd

- The shepherd seeks & finds his sheep.
- The shepherd leads his flock.
- He feeds them.
- He protects them from predators.
- He will even die for his sheep.





God finds his sheep

“We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way...” – Isaiah 53:6

“Suppose one of you has a 100 sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the 99 in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it?” – Luke 15:4



God leads his flock

“The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he restores my soul. He guides me in paths of of righteousness for his name’s sake.” – Psalm 23:1-3

“The man who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep... He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.” – John 10:2-3



God feeds his sheep

“As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so I will look after my sheep... I will tend them in good pasture, and the mountain heights of Israel will be their grazing land. There they will lie down in good grazing land, and there they will feed in a rich pasture on the mountains of Israel.” – Ezekiel 34:12,14



God protects his sheep

“Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.” – Psalm 23:4

“As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so I will look after my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places where they were scattered...” – Ezekiel 34:12



God will die for his sheep

“Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, against the man who is close to me!” declares the Lord Almighty. “Strike the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered.” – Zechariah 13:7

“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.” – John 10:11

God as King

- A king has prestige.
- A king rules.
- A king protects his subjects.
- An insult against the king is rebellion.





A king has prestige

“I am a great king,” says the Lord Almighty, “and my name is to be feared among the nations.” – Malachi 1:14



A king rules

“The Lord sits enthroned over the flood; the Lord is enthroned as king forever.” – Psalm 29:10

“God reigns over the nations; God is seated on his holy throne... the kings of the earth belong to God; he is greatly exalted.” – Psalm 47:8-9



A king protects his subjects

“The Lord is king forever and ever... You hear, O Lord, the desire of the afflicted... defending the fatherless and the oppressed, in order that man, who is of the earth, may terrify no more.” – Psalm 10:16-18

“For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king; it is he who will save us.” – Isaiah 33:22



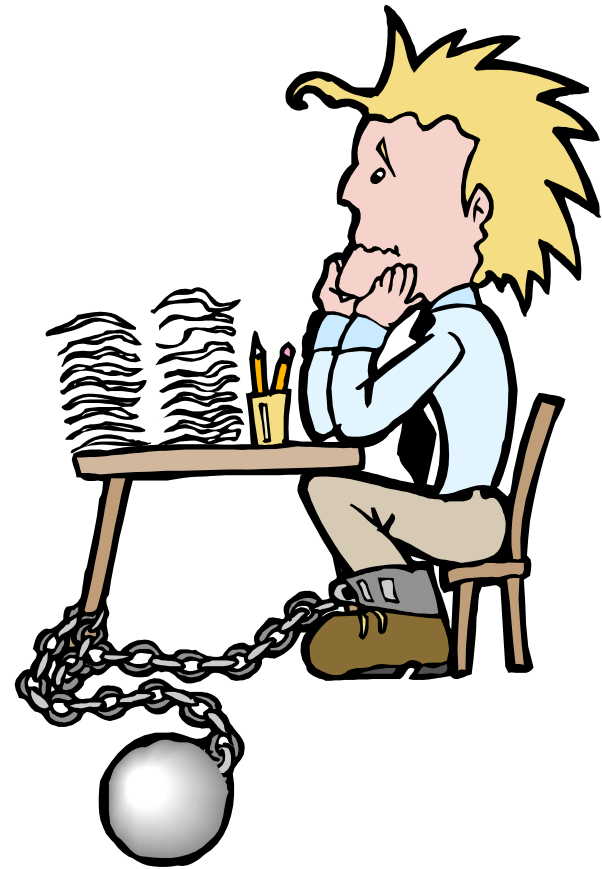
To insult a king...

“But his subjects hated him and sent a delegation after him to say, ‘We don’t want this man to be our king.’ But he was made king, however, and returned home... [He said] ‘But those enemies of mine who did not want me to be king over them—bring them here and kill them in front of me.’” – Luke 19:12-27

“The rest seized his servants, mistreated them and killed them. The king was enraged. He sent his army and destroyed those murderers and burned their city.” – Matthew 22:6-7

God as Master

- Picture is so common in the Bible as to be a “dead” metaphor.
- It is definitely out of favor in our society.
- A master deserves honor & respect.
- God’s relation to humans is pictured in the master-slave relationship.





A master deserves respect

“A son honors his father, and a servant his master. If I am a father, where is the honor due me? If I am a master, where is the respect due me?” – Malachi 1:6



Master-slave relation

“Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ... And masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him.” –
Ephesians 6:5-9

God as Father

- Sometimes as mother
- A father has natural children.
- A father may adopt children.
- Children have a family resemblance.
- God provides as a good father does.
- He disciplines.
- He loves and forgives.





Sometimes as mother

“My heart is not proud, O Lord... I have stilled and quieted my soul; like a weaned child with its mother, like a weaned child is my soul within me.”
– Psalm 131:1-2

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing.” – Matthew 23:37



Natural children

“Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.” – John 1:12-13

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth... into an inheritance that can never fade...” – 1 Peter 1:3-4



Adopted children

“When the time had fully come, God sent his Son... that we might receive the full rights of sons... So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir.” – Galatians 4:4-7



A family resemblance

“This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; nor is anyone who does not love his brother.” – 1 John 3:10

“Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.” – Matthew 5:44-45



God provides

“Which of you , if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!” – Matthew 7:9-11



God disciplines

“Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness.” –
Hebrews 12:10

“My son, do not make light of the Lord’s discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son.” –
Proverbs 3:11-12



God loves & forgives

“But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him...
‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’” – Luke 15:20-24

God as Husband

- God's covenant with believers is compared to the marriage covenant.
- A marriage involves mutual love & joy.
- The wife is to submit to her husband.
- One purpose of marriage is children.
- A husband provides & protects.





Marriage as covenant

“It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them.” – Jeremiah 31:32

“I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him.” – 2 Corinthians 11:2



Mutual love & joy

“As a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so will your God rejoice over you.” – Isaiah 62:5

“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.”
Ephesians 5:25



Wife's submission

“The king is enthralled by your beauty; honor him, for he is your lord.” – Psalm 45:11

“Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.” – Ephesians 5:24



Bearing children

“Sing, O barren woman, you who never bore a child; burst into song, shout for joy, you who were never in labor; because more are the children of the desolate woman than of her who has a husband.” – Isaiah 54:1

“Your sons will take the place of your fathers; you will make them princes throughout the land.” – Psalm 45:16



Husband provides & protects

“All your sons will be taught by the Lord, and great will be your children’s peace... no weapon formed against you will prevail, and you will refute every tongue that accuses you.” – Isaiah 54:13-17

“For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior.” – Ephesians 5:23



Conclusions

- These images can help us understand God better, especially through experiencing what it feels like.
- These images can help us understand how we should act as potters, farmers, parents, etc.
- These images may help a seeker to see God for the first time.



The End



May we use the biblical pictures to
know and love God better.