

SLIDE 1. Ongoing Series: The Names of Jesus

Teaching: *Image of the Invisible God*

Sunday May 4, 2025

HELP. THANKS. WOW.

There is, of course, more to our prayer lives than these 3 categories of prayer – confession, for instance - but HELP / THANKS / WOW is a good place to start - and an easy place to remember.

SLIDE 2.

HELP = asking God for help.

THANKS = thanking God for who He is or what He's done.

WOW = those times we've seen God at work around us or in partnership with us doing something good.

In a moment, I'm going to invite you to share any one of these prayers with us so we can be informed and pray with you and worship with you. Remember...

SLIDE 3

We ask God for help because... ***God is our refuge and strength, and ever-present help in trouble*** (Ps. 46:1).

We thank God for who He is and what He's done because He is Jehovah Jireh (our Provider) and – ***Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of heavenly lights...*** (Jas. 1:17).

And we tell stories about how God relates to us and us to Him because it gives God the credit He deserves, and it dignifies our lives. ***Without God we can do nothing...*** and yet the apostle Paul describes us as ***God's fellow workers*** (Jn. 15:5; 2 Cor. 6:1).

SLIDE 4. Reminders for sharing:

- 1. Introduce yourself by name.**
- 2. Know what you plan to say.**
- 3. Be brief.**
- 4. Hold the mic. on your chin.**

SLIDE 5

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And with that – let's pray! I'll pray – then open the floor for HELP / THANKS / WOW.

We have been – during the first Sundays of the month in the new year – praying together, meditating on a name of Jesus, and celebrating communion.

SLIDE 6. Today – we are going to think about/meditate on this name of Jesus – **The Image of the Invisible God.**

Which immediately might cause us to wonder, “How can there be an *image* of something we *can’t see*?”

Wouldn’t that be like asking a grade school child to draw a picture of the wind?!

Or wouldn’t that be like Late Night Talk Show host, Stephen Colbert – in his *C Colbert Questionert* segment – asking his guests, “What # am I thinking of?” – and expecting them to guess correctly (assuming he ever had a # in mind)?!

Or wouldn’t it be like the smell of the color 9 – as Chris Rice sang about it back in 2014?!

Is this some kind of clever bible wordplay? The *Image* of the *Invisible* God?!
Yes and No!

He is the image of the invisible God... is how the Apostle Paul begins a 5-verse poem – from vv. 15-20 – in chp. 1 - which talks about the *Supremacy of Christ*.

Let’s begin with the obvious: God is *invisible*.

SLIDE 7. Or – as John puts it in his gospel: ***No one has ever seen God*** (Jn. 1:18). God is neither George Burns in the movie, “Oh, God!” – nor is He Morgan Freeman in the movie, “Bruce Almighty.”

And when we talk about God - we talk about a being we cannot see.

But Christ we did see. Christ was an historical figure. A figure who walked on the planet - as confirmed by bible and non-bible scholars alike. A figure who’s had 4 biographies written about Him. Biographies which recorded people seeing Him alive – then dead – then alive again!

Biographies of a *visible* man.

This *visible* man being the **image** of the *invisible* God.

The Greek word for “image” - here - is difficult to translate – because it doesn’t really have an English equivalent. It is also used in 2 Cor. 4:4 where Christ is described as the “Image of God.”

Here in Col. 1:15 - it means “likeness” – like I resemble my dad or twins look like each other or Pastor Bryan is the doppelganger of actor/director John Krasinski.

You can see it right?

SLIDE 8.

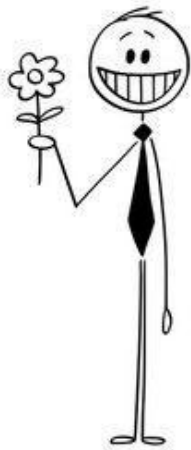


SLIDE 9. This Greek word – **EIKON** – from which we get the English word – **ICON** means more – though – than an accidental similarity between one person and another.

It represents more than an artificial imitation. It implies an original – or an archetype – from which the original is drawn.

Take, for instance, this stickman drawing...

SLIDE 10.



It is an EIKON/ICON. It is an original. It is an archetype of a stickman wearing a tie, holding a flower. At or near your seat – you were given a pencil and a piece of cardstock paper. I'd like you to draw a picture of this picture – that will look like this picture – but it (obviously) won't be the original – to illustrate – pun intended – the difference between a "likeness" and an "original."

Mine. Yours. Will look like it, but it will not be the original, it will not be the archetype – which isn't a comment of our art ability but of the nature of the EIKON/ICON itself.

SLIDE 11. Jesus is the EIKON/ICON of God. **Jesus represents and manifests God.**

Jesus possesses all the essential qualities of Deity and so He *represents* God. Just as – on analysis – a tiny drop of the ocean has all the same elements of that same vast ocean – so Christ in human form represented the essential characteristics of Divinity. In Him we see, for instance, the righteousness of God, the purity of God, the love of God, and the power of God.

Christ was the visible *manifestation* of the Invisible God.

If we wonder what God looks like – He looks like Jesus!

A First Century Jewish Rabbi.

Jesus said to Philip in the Upper Room, “Anyone who has seen Me has seen the Father” (Jn. 14:9). Jesus was the Eternal God become Temporal Man. He was God in flesh and blood. He was God speaking the language of the man on the street. He was God in relatable, understandable terms.

Jesus is our mental image and concept of what God is like.

SLIDE 12. Jesus is God’s self-disclosure.

There are 2 other titles that are closely related to this 1.

In Hebrews 1:3 – Christ is called the “radiance of God’s glory” – which may be to say something like this about Him – that we cannot look directly at the brilliance of the noonday sun – but its rays and warmth reveal to us what the sun is like.

Jesus was the ray of light that penetrated this dark earth – who gave us a time to see and know something of the glory of God.

Also in Hebrews 1:3 – Christ is called the “exact representation of God’s being.”

Which is really cool! – because the Greek word used here for “exact representation” is the word - “charakter” – from which we get our English word – “character.”

It was the word that described the impression of a seal left on clay or wax – the original stamped onto a surface – a precise reproduction – as if to say that Jesus was a 3D photocopy of God – if God was photo-copy-able!

Jesus is the “charakter” of God – a faithful and detailed reproduction of the nature of God – in His life – His ministry – and His life from death!

Jesus is neither stickman nor John Krasinski – neither George Burns nor Morgan Freeman – but He was a *visible* man like no other.

Jesus represents and manifests God.

Jesus is the Image of the Invisible God.

COMMUNION. A communion liturgy with questions for self-examination (based on an early Anabaptist liturgy written by Balthasar Hubmaier).

PREPARATION. Paul writes, 'Examine yourself, and only then eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For all who eat and drink without recognizing the body, eat and drink judgement against themselves.'

Jesus said, 'This is my body, given for you'. Do you recognize that the Lord Jesus Christ, God's Son, gave his body and blood for you on the cross, and that you only have forgiveness and eternal life through that one sacrifice, received by faith?

Let us examine ourselves. *Silent self-examination*

Paul writes, 'We who are many are one body' and, 'There should be no division in the body, but all its parts should have equal concern for one another.' Do you recognize that God calls you by his Spirit to be one Body with all who share that faith with you, to watch over and support one another in love?

Let us examine ourselves. *Silent self-examination*

Paul writes, 'We were all baptized by one Spirit into one body...You are the body of Christ,' and Jesus said, 'As the Father has sent me, I am sending you. Receive the Holy Spirit.' Do you recognize that God sends you into the world by his Spirit to be the Body of Christ in it, showing his love in word and deed, even to those who are your enemies, just as the Father sent his Son into the world to give his body and blood for you?

Let us examine ourselves. *Silent self-examination*

PARTICIPATION. And when he had given thanks, Jesus broke the bread and said, 'This is my body which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.'

Is not the bread we take a remembrance of the body of Christ?

Let us take it together.

Jesus said, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.'

Is not the juice we take a celebration of our forgiveness in Christ?

Let us take it together.

CLOSING PRAYER. Creating and redeeming God, we give you thanks and praise for your covenant of grace made for our salvation in Jesus Christ our Lord. I come this day to covenant with you and my fellow disciples, with whom I share this bread and cup, to watch over each other and to walk together before you in all your ways known and to be made known. Amen