

THE IMAGE OF CHRIST

Deuteronomy 4:15-16 ... "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..."

Around the world you can find paintings in churches and in books, plus statues that supposedly depict the image of Christ. For centuries, artists used their imaginations to invent those images. Since his time on earth occurred before cameras were invented, and before the great renaissance artists were born, it is impossible for their images to reflect what Christ looked like. The same is true of Mary and other personalities in the Bible, such as Moses, David and Abraham. Pictures or statues you see of them are the product of artists' imaginations. Most Protestant churches I have been affiliated with, actually forbid the display of such paintings and statues in their churches and publications, because our human nature can lead us to solemnize images, even though none of them are accurate.

Is this really a problem? Does it matter that several thousand artificial images of Jesus have been created in the last 2,000+ years? It can be a problem and it might matter IF you adopt such an image for the purpose of worship. In today's verse, God cautions the Israelites to avoid idolatry. He reminds them that when he led them in the wilderness, he prevented them from seeing his actual form so they would not be tempted to recreate his image and then worship the image instead of God himself. It is probable that God prevented an accurate picture of Jesus from being made, to keep us from worshipping his image. We know there were artists in Christ's day because Roman coins have been found that bear the image of Roman emperors. The Egyptians created images of their Pharaohs long before Christ appeared.

Romans 1:17 reads: "For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, 'The just shall live by faith.'" Our relationship with God is not established in pictures or statues, and we are actually forbidden to allow that to happen. Instead, your relationship with God is through faith and the presence of his Holy Spirit in your life once you are born-again. If you find it difficult to relate to Jesus without having an artificial picture or statue of him to look at, then you may not yet be born again; your faith is fragile. Ask God to reveal himself to you and then worship him in faith, not through images that man creates. Once God has revealed himself to your heart, no picture or statue will be enough for you.

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