



Week 4: Creation of Humanity

Genesis 2

January 27, 2008

The creation of humanity is told in two different accounts. The first account is part of the introduction to the book of Genesis and is found in 1:26-31. The second account is within the *toldah* (generations or account) of the heavens and the earth in 2:4-25. The first account provides us with a broad overview of humanity's creation, emphasizing God's purpose for humanity. The second account gives us the details and provides the framework within which humanity kind find its purpose; namely the family.

God's Purpose in Creating Humanity

In contemplating the culmination of his creation, God says, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness." Somehow, we as humans, reflect the image of God. We bear the image of God, much in the same way that a child might bear the image of his or her parents.

The creation of man was unique in this regard. All of the animals are created "after their kind." But now, humans are created "in the image of God," or to say it another way, after God's kind. No other creature is said to bear the creator's image¹².

Even the specifics of the creation are unique. Up that point God spoke things into existence, saying "let their be". Now, with man, God says "let us make." God forms man out of pre-existing materials, and very uniquely, in a very intimate, deliberate act, breaths life itself into the body. (Genesis 2).

Created In God's Image

But what exactly does this mean? What is it in our make up which makes us like God? There is a great deal of debate as to exactly what this means. Here are a few possibilities of what it means to be an image bearer:

Physical Body

We know that God is spirit (John 4:24) and therefore this can not be the fullness of what it means to be made in God's image. Yet, Jesus was God in human flesh. Jesus, in his present glorified state, has a glorified body. Perhaps our body does indeed reflect something of the element of physicality possessed by the Son¹³. Nonetheless, this certainly does not encompass all that being made in the likeness of God does, for even the animals have physical bodies.

Rationality

The clearest distinction between the animals and us is our ability to think. Humans have the capability to not merely perceive reality, but make judgments about reality, contemplate reality, imagine alternative realities, and communicate these realities. God has made man a rational being¹⁴. God himself is also rational (Colossians 2:3).

¹² Sailhamer.

¹³ Dr. Patrick Taylor, in a lecture given March 1996, Institute of Christian Discipleship, Grace Community Fellowship.

¹⁴ Allen, 155.

Yet this is not the fullness of being like God, for other beings have an apparent rationality. The angels, and Satan, himself have the ability to reason. An even more compelling argument that our rationality is not what solely defines our image of God is presented by Barry Striker:

Furthermore, to accept this interpretation fully is to suggest that persons with higher levels of intelligence or more astute powers of reason would be able to relate to God on a higher level. Scripture knows of no such distinction. All are created in God's image¹⁵.

Freedom

God has given man the ability to choose what to do. We have the ability to determine our own course in life, from the mundane selection of clothing in the morning, to the critical decision of whether or not to follow God. Animals do not possess this freedom. Angels are very limited in their freedom. But man can choose his own course. The caveats of this freedom are that man, by choosing to follow God of his own free will, has the ability to have an intimacy with God on a level deeper than any other creature.

Relational

The image of God is tied solely to a human's relationship to God. Man was created to be in relationship with God. Before the fall, man, it seems, frequently met and "walked" with God (Genesis 3:8). The whole of scripture is a picture of God seeking to have that intimacy with man.

This view focuses only on a human's relationship to God and does not ask what enables a human to have that relationship, which is a substantive issue. Furthermore, it assumes then, that those outside of relationship with God do not bear his image.

Created to Continue God's Creation

While all four of these options are a part of what it means to be an image bearer of God, the real answer to what the question is found in the purpose of humanity in verse 28.

And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth." (Genesis 1:28)

These are not so much commands, but blessings that God has given humanity. It is our privilege and blessing to be able to fill and subdue the earth¹⁶. These are blessings that come from bearing God's image. If we perceive these as commandments then we must consider all humans who do not procreate, either by their own choice (i.e. celibacy or birth control) or by God's choice (i.e. barrenness) to not be in God's will. The rest of scripture does not ever suggest that to be true. Therefore the call to fill the earth and subdue the earth is seen not as a command but the blessing of being made in the image of God.

God created us not just as the culmination of his creative act, but to continue His creative act. Just as God filled the emptiness with the abundance of life, now we are to multiply and fill the earth with his image. Just as God brought transformed chaos into order, now we are to subdue and exercise dominion over creation.

¹⁵ Barry Striker. "Anthropology." *Holeman Bible Dictionary for Windows*. (Parsons Technology, 1991).

¹⁶ Ibid.

Bearing the Image of God: Creating order from chaos

The image of God is found in the role as lord over the earth and in humanity's dominion over the earth. Both Psalm 8 and Genesis 1 connect the likeness of God in man to his dominion over creation. We are uniquely set up as beings with the capacity and responsibility to rule over this world. We are like God in that we have an element of sovereignty over this world.

As image bearers, we also have the ability and right to exercise dominion over creation, continuing to bring order to God's creation. The beauty of manmade objects then, is an extension of the creativity of God. Architecture, engineering, art, and other acts of creativity are part of the blessing that comes from being image bearers, and reflects our dominion over the rest of creation. While humanity has the right to subdue nature, we must ensure that we are wise stewards of that God-given right.

However, the exercise of dominion is a consequence of the image and should not be equated it with the image itself. Humans exercise dominion and creativity because we bear the image of God in the substance of our being. We don't obtain God's image by exercising dominion or creativity.

While humanity has the right to subdue nature, we must ensure that we are wise stewards of that God-given right. Christians should recognize the important responsibility that comes with this dominion, so that future generations also have the earth to enjoy and use. This is the foundation of Christian environmentalism.

There is, nonetheless, a fundamental difference between Christian environmentalism and secular environmentalism. Most secular environmentalists see humanity as part of nature, not rulers over nature. As "part of" nature, we therefore have no more right to use or rule over nature than do any other creature. We have no more right to use a river than the fish. We have no more right to use a tree than the birds. Christian environmentalists, while not wanting to blatantly destroy fish and birds, see that humans have the right and responsibility, given by our creator, to use rivers and trees, and that the fish and the birds were put here for our benefit, not vice versa.

In all our use of creation we are fulfilling God's creative act of bringing order from chaos.

Bearing the Image of God: Creating fullness from emptiness

As image bearers, we have the ability to reproduce the image of God, filling the earth with the image of God. While there is much debate over what this "image" exactly means, it is clear that God sees part of humanity's purpose is to fill His creation with His image.

One of the primary ways marriage reflects the image of God is in child bearing. As image bearers, we have the ability to reproduce the image of God, filling the earth with the image of God. God wants to use humanity as a primary offensive strategy to promote His agenda on the earth. In other words, godly families who continually create offspring who reflect God's image are the front line method of infiltrating and controlling creation. That is why God places such importance on family.

The Creation of the Family

As we move from chapter 1 to 2, we move from a transcendent powerful God to an intimate, relational God. Chapter 1, God wills creation into being. Chapter 2, God lovingly forms man from the dirt, personally blowing life into him. God fashions a woman from the rib of the man, crafting her specifically for his purposes. In chapter 2, God walks with humanity in the garden in the cool of the day. God is personal, created for relationship with each other and with Him.

This different view of God has caused some to see these as two different creation stories, written apart from each other and cobbled to together at some later date (this is one of the key arguments used for the JEDP authorship discussed last week). But these are not two different gods. This is the

paradox of the one true God: he can be all powerful and transcendent and at the same time all loving, involved, and intimate.

This picture of the relational God sets the example for all human relationships, but especially the relationship of man and woman. For in chapter 2 we see that the means by which humanity is to meet its purpose is within familial relationships. God has specifically designed marriage and the family to accomplish the on-going creative work of filling and ordering creation.

Creation of Man

The details of the creation of the first man is found in Genesis 2:4-7. In the creation of man, there are three important items to discuss: the creator, the method of creation, and the life breathed into the man.

The Name of God

First, is the name of God. Up to this point in chapter 1, we've been told that God created the heavens and the earth. The word God is a translation of the Hebrew word, Elohim. It means God in the same sense that it does in English. It can mean the big capital G God, but it can also mean the lower case g god. It is a generic form for divinity and is not a personal name as much as a title.

However, when we get to chapter two, this God is identified not just as Elohim, the generic impersonal title, but as LORD God. The term LORD, however, is really a bad translation. Again, in English, Lord is a title, not a personal name. In Hebrew the actual words here are Elohim Yahweh, or the god Yahweh.

In your English bible, you will often see God referred to as LORD, capital LORD, and you will see him referred to as Lord, capital L, lower case ord. Whenever it is in lower case, it means, lord, like a title for master. Whenever you see it all in caps, it means Yahweh, the personal name of God. And Yahweh does not mean master or Lord.

In Exodus 3:13-15 we learn that Yawheh is the true name of God, His memorial name for all generations. The name, literally a form of the verb "to-be" in Hebrew, speaks of God's self-sustaining nature.

In the 10 commandments, there is the commandment not to take the name of LORD (Yahweh) in vain. In fear of doing that the Jews got in the habit of whenever they saw Yahweh in their bible, they would read Yahweh with their eyes, but say Lord (Adonai) with their mouths.

This habit became so ingrained that when the Hebrew bible was translated into Greek in the Septuagint, the Greek work Kyrious (Lord) was used whenever they came across the word Yahweh. That tradition then has been carried on even to our modern day translations today.

The result is that we don't know the name of God. It is, my friends, Yahweh. It is his memorial name, to be known for all generations.

Now what does this have to do with the creation of Man? It is the God Yahweh who formed man. It is not an impersonal God. It is the personal God. In chapter 1 God creates by his word. Now in chapter 2, Yahweh forms God with his hands. Do you see the intimacy in this? Do you see how much more personal and relational God becomes with this part of his creation? Humanity is special because He was made by the personal God, Yahweh.

God Formed Man from the Dust

Man is not spoken into being as is the rest of creation. Man is formed from the dust. God took existing earth and fashioned it like a potter might take clay and form it. Again, this speaks to the deep personal nature of this creation. We came from pre-existing materials and were hand loving molded into who we are. The physicality of our being is emphasized here. We are made of matter. We are physical. We are the dust of the earth.

This is not a negative thing. This is not to bring us down, for created the dust, and he formed that dust into who we are. It is instead an affirmation of our physicality.

God Breathed Life Into Man

Yahweh breathed life into the man to make him a living being. In the Hebrew, the word *spirit*, *wind*, *breath*, *air* are all the same word. When in Genesis 1:2 it says the Spirit of God was over the deep, it literally says the breath of God was over the deep. Now that same breath of life, the breath of God, the Spirit of God was put into the man, it is at that point that the man comes to life.

Note here that it is the spirit who gives life. To be spiritual is to have life. The same is true for us today. To be spiritual is to bring life to your mortal bodies (Romans 8:10-11).

Just as before God blew His spirit into Adam, his body was dead, so also, if Christ is not in you, your mortal body is considered dead. But if Christ is in you, if you believe that Jesus is Lord and that God has raised Him from the dead, then just as God blew his spirit into Adam to give Him life, so God will pour out his Holy Spirit onto you and bring you to life as well. To be spiritual is not to transcend the body, but to give life to the body. It is to start living. That same Spirit which brought Adam to life, the same Spirit who brought Jesus back to life, is the same Spirit who can live in you if you put your trust in Jesus as your savior.

Creation of Woman

“It is not good for man to be alone” (2:18)

In the detail view, we see that God made man first. Woman was not created at the same time as man. This does not mean, however, that women were an after thought. Indeed, God created man first to demonstrate just the opposite- that women were vitally important to man, and that without woman, humanity does not properly reflect the true image of God.

Up to this point, after every creative act of God, God remarks, “it is good.” That is, until 2:18, when God suddenly declares, “it is not good for man to be alone.” God is making a key observation that shows the importance of women in creation. God designed men and women to need each other, and that God’s original design is for men and women to be married and bound to each other.

That does not mean that God does not have a place for singleness within his created order. Paul, in 1 Corinthians 7 tells us that there are good reasons to be single. However, it is clear that these are exceptions to the general rule, and that we are only to remain single as a way to increase our devotion or service to God and not out of selfish motives.

“A Suitable Helper” (2:19-23)

To drive this point home, God shows the man how alone he is and how necessary woman is. So God brings all the animals before the man and has him give names to all the animals. God’s point in this was no so much for Adam to get to know the animals, but for him to observe a couple of things. First, that none of the animals was like him. As each animal came by, it would become clear that no other creature would be a suitable helper for him, for no other animal bore the image of God. Secondly, each animal had a mate. There were male and female of each animal. Yet Adam was alone. God wanted man to see that being alone without female was not part of the normal order.

Having made His point, God put Adam into a deep sleep and formed the woman from his rib. The woman was formed out of man specifically to be, what God describes in verse 18 as “a suitable helper.” None of the animals were suitable. But now, God was forming woman to meet the specific needs of man.

When the man awakens and sees the woman, his response demonstrates that he understands what God has given. For now here is “bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh.” In other words, this one is not like the animals. She is like me. She was created to be like me and is now a suitable helper for me.

God has designed men and women to need each other. Husbands, your wife is a suitable helper given by God for you, and you need her. Likewise, wives, your husband is a suitable helper given by God for you, and you need him.

Today's society tries to show that we don't need man and woman to find fulfillment. Single women attempt to find fulfillment themselves on television shows. Men are taught by society not to need women, but to "go it alone." This is a direct contradiction to what God was trying to demonstrate in Genesis 2.

The timeless principle of marriage (2:24-25)

From these events, Moses draws out a timeless principle about marriage. Because of the way God made man and woman, because it is not good for us to be alone, there are certain principles that apply to marriage throughout history.

Leaving our Parents

First we are to "leave our father and mother." When we marry, we are to break the emotional bonds that we have with our parents. We are to no longer look to our parents to provide for our emotional, physical, and spiritual needs. Now our spouse should fulfill those needs.

One of the biggest pitfalls facing any marriage is when one spouse refuses to let go of the parents, or when parents refuse to let go of the married child. When these bonds are not broken, it goes against God's design for marriage and creates difficulties and problems in marriage that can be difficult to overcome.

Cleaving our spouse

But not only are we to "leave," but we are to "cleave" to our spouses. To cleave means to become united, joined together such that we "become one flesh." The becoming one flesh is more than just a sexual union, although that is certainly a part of what Moses is talking. There is a metaphysical joining together, such that in God's eyes, in marriage there is now a oneness. In marriage, two individuals come together as one.

If you have seen a couple who have been together for many years, you can see this in evidence. My grandparents were married for over 60 years. They were truly a couple who were "one." They talked alike, the thought alike, they cared and loved each other alike. They were "one flesh."

That does not mean we betray our individuality. Quite the opposite, for marriage, when operating as God designed, enhances our individuality. As we are able to become intimate and transparent to another human being, we can more easily understand and see ourselves for who we are. As we reveal our selves to our mate, we come to understand ourselves better.

The Unity of Marriage

In 1:26, God says, "let Us make man in Our image." Why didn't God say, "I will now make man in my image?" Why does He use the plural here?

In the Hebrew, just as in English, there is the "royal plural," where a sovereign refers to himself or herself in the plural. However, this also leaves open the possibility that God is speaking within the Trinity to himself. While not a definitive proof, it does leave open the possibility of the trinity.

The Trinity is the Christian doctrine which states that God is both one in essence and entity, but that God is also three persons, Father, Son and Spirit. These persons are equally God and equal to each other, and so closely unified that they are considered one. Yet they are also distinct from each other.

The fullness of God's image

Genesis 1:26 is significant beyond just a proof text for Trinitarian theology. God's image is most fully realized when a man and a woman are joined together in marriage; for marriage serves a living example of the Holy Trinity. Just as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three persons joined to become one, so also, a husband and wife are two persons joined to become one. When the world sees a

properly function marriage, they should have a greater glimpse of the Trinitarian God. This is bearing the image of God, and is the primary purpose of marriage.

Genesis 1:27 shows that both Male and Female were together made in God's image. The details of this creation in Chapter 2 emphasize the equality of male and female. Here we learn that the male was made first, and the verdict was that this creation was not good (Genesis 2:18). Only after female was formed (again in a specific direct formation from pre-existing materials) did God pronounce that His creation was "very good"

Without male and female together, man is incomplete (1 Corinthians 1:11). Apart from each other the image is incomplete. The unity of marriage reflects the unity of God, and is more able to carry out God's direction together.¹⁷

Created as the out pouring of God's Love¹⁸

In addition the doctrine of the Trinity has implications for our understanding of why God created humanity. A non-Trinitarian monotheist would answer that God created for his own good pleasure and for his own glory. However, this understanding of creation makes God a narcissistic egotist. He created just so he would have someone to tell him how great He is.

Trinitarianism teaches us that God did not create the world so he could have someone to glorify him. Instead God created out of the outpouring the love between the members of the Trinity.

There seems to be a truism that when people come together in love and unity, the creative act comes out of that. For example, why do we have children? Ideally it comes from two distinct individuals have come together in one flesh and in the midst of that unity and out of the outpouring of that love comes a desire to share that love with another—a child. Having children is not something we do to find our own glory. We do not have children so they can worship us. We have children out of the expression of our love for each other and as a means to extend our oneness and our love to a greater level. Children become then the fulfillment of the love found within the unity of a husband and a wife.

So it is true with the trinity. God created humanity out of the outpouring of the love and unity of the Trinity. As Father, Son and Spirit have been sharing in the communion since eternity past, out of that comes the creative act not to be worshipped by the creation, but so that God could extend the love and union found within His triune self with others. This Trinitarian view of creation shows that God is not an ego-maniac, but a God of love and humility.

Furthermore, as humans accept the blessing of being fruitful and multiplying the earth, we continue in and share that outpouring of love with our own family.

¹⁷ "God's Purpose for Oneness." *Family Life Marriage Conference*. (Little Rock AR: Family Life Ministries), 31.

¹⁸ Paul Metzger. *What In the World Is God Doing?* (Unpublished class notes: TH 508, Christian Theology II. Multnomah Biblical Seminary, Summer 2003).

