

The Book of Genesis

Genesis 1:26-27 (Prologue)

Day 6 of Creation

11th Message in The Book of Genesis

Sunday 15 September 2019

Glenvista Baptist Church

Genesis 1:26-27 (ESV) “²⁶ Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth. ²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.”

Introduction

- a) We are still on the Sixth Day of creation, and we come now to the apex of God's creative works. God had now completed the creation of all the land creatures – and yet there was still one more being, one for whom all the others had been made, that was still outstanding. On Day 6 God created the first human beings, and He made them a man and a woman, and then He crowned them as rulers over all the other creatures that He had already made. And God made the man first and from the man He also made the woman, and the man would rule not only over creation but also over his wife. And the man would be the federal head of all who would come after him; for those made in his likeness he would be a representative in all ways. And God made man and woman very good, in His likeness bearing His image.
- b) And God made man and woman very different from everything else that He had made. Everything else was made according to its own kind with the ability of reproducing within the bounds of that kind. But man was not made according to his own kind, man was the only creature made in the image of God. Men and women were made in God's own likeness. The pattern God used when making man was nothing but Himself, and this means that mankind has a very special connection to God. And this connection far surpassed the relation God had to the animal kingdom, for God had a special affection for the man and the woman; a special love He did not have for the animal kingdom. And this special love God has for man was shown from the very beginning in that God made man in His own image.
- c) And so we now come to the climax of God's creative activity: “**Then God said, ‘Let us make man’**”. And this dear friends is a most significant statement to be found in **Genesis 1**. It describes the final activity of the creation week, when God produces the very best of the created order, and its significance is seen also in the amount of space given to the description of this creative act. Nothing else in **chapter 1** is given the amount of space given to the creation of man. The creation of man is a profound and mysterious truth; a

truth impossible to fully comprehend. Man was to be in the image and the likeness of God Himself! What a profound thought. And therefore man was also “created” (*bara*) in the image of God, a thought we’ve seen previously, also known as the *Imago Dei*.

- d) And so, the stress here falls on man’s distinctness – beast made according to their kinds – man made in the *image* – man made in the *likeness* of God. And those two terms – *image* and *likeness* – reinforce each other; whereby “image” is man’s indelible constitution as a rational and morally responsible being; whilst “likeness” is that spiritual accord with the will of God which was lost at the fall. After the fall man is still said to be in God’s image (Gen 9:6) and likeness (James 3:9), nonetheless he requires to be “renewed...after the image of Him that created him” (Col 3:10; Eph 4:24). As long as we are human we are by definition in the image of God – let’s then see how God proceeded to do just that on the Sixth Day.

Point 1 – “God, in Trinitarian Consultation, in the Beginning” (Gen 1:26a)

Genesis 1:26a (ESV) “²⁶ Then God said, “Let us...”

- a) **V26** A stark contrast is introduced in **verse 26**. Whereas up until now God each time said, “Let there be...”, He now says “Let us”. Beloved, before us unfolds a most intriguing picture. In previous instances each act of God followed His command which in essence stated, “Let it be”. When it comes to the creation of man though it is as if God were speaking to Himself when saying, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.” It really is as if we are allowed to peep into the secret council chamber of God where we hear God making decisions. We are privileged here to witness God being in consultation with Himself in the act of creating man. John Calvin comments, “Hitherto God has been introduced simply as *commanding*; now, when He approaches the most excellent of His works, He enters into *consultation*.”¹ What an incredible thought. God in consultation with God in the making of man! Folk our attention is drawn here to the very dignity of our nature. This is the final activity of God’s creation but simultaneously also the highest act of God’s creation. We can truly say the best was left for last. Now that is not said in a man-centered or an ego-centric manner – but rather in a manner that points to God, for God’s highest creative act is left till the last so that in the creation of man, which is the apex of God’s creation, God’s supreme glory and power can be on display.
- b) Now it needs to be said that God was not in consultation with the angels for example, because God was not about to make man in the image of angels but God was about to make man in His own image. Therefore God could only have been speaking to Himself; one member of the Tri-une Godhead in counsel with the other members thereof. Now admittedly, this concept of God speaking to God is strange to the human ear, but it is a concept which is not foreign to the Scriptures. For you see, dear friends,

¹ John Calvin, *A Commentary on Genesis*, translated and edited by John King, (Banner of Truth edition, 1965), page 92

this fascinating type of exchange happens in a number of other places in the Old Testament as well. We read in -:

- Psalm 2:7 – **“⁷ I will tell of the decree: The Lord said to me, “You are my Son; today I have begotten you.”**
- Isaiah 48:16 - **“¹⁶ Come near to Me, hear this: I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; From the time that it was, I was there. And now the Lord God and His Spirit Have sent Me.”**
- Psalms 110:1 - **“¹ The Lord says to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.”**

c) In the New Testament we have similar examples of such Trinitarian discussion before our Lord's human birth. We read the following:

- Matthew 11:25-26 – **“²⁵ At that time Jesus declared, “I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; ²⁶ yes, Father, for such was your gracious will.”**
- John 17:24-25 – **“²⁴ Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. ²⁵ O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me.”**

d) Now friends what we need to see here is that the text is inferring that this Divine Counsel took place before time began and then particularly on Day 6, God in consultation with the Son and the Spirit, agreed on the how to of creating man in His image making man according to His likeness. Again this concept is not foreign to written revelation, for we are told that the Lamb of God, had in the determination of these councils been slain before the foundations of the world (**1 Pet 1:20; Rev 13:8; Rev 17:8**). God's Word teaches also that the names of the redeemed had been written in the Lamb's Book of Life before the foundations of the world (**Rev 13:8**), and that God had called those who were to be saved by His grace, before the world began (**2 Tim 1:9**). Note that all these are acts of our God which took place in Trinitarian Consultation before the world began.

e) **V26a** And what we have here in **verse 26** is that another such consultation is taking place. That which our God had agreed upon in such Trinitarian Council now finds implementation in the beginning. Now friends, what makes this part so unique is essentially introduced in two words – **“Let us...”**. These two words evidently introduces divine dialogue. You may remember earlier that we saw the Spirit of God hovering over the face of the waters (**Gen 1:2**). That of course demonstrates a co-participation in creation. And the New Testament of course gives full expression to this when it teaches the radical involvement of Christ in creation; and perhaps the most well-known of such teaching is found in **John 1:1-3**, where our Lord teaches, **“¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.”** And then of course **Colossians 1:15-17** so wonderfully testifies of the involvement of the Son in creation, **“¹⁵ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. ¹⁶ For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all**

things were created through him and for him. ¹⁷ And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.”

- f) Now in **verse 26** an awesome declaration is made by God about man, and that we will consider under our second heading. For now though marvel at the Sovereignty (He is God and He alone rules), Omnipotence (He is all All-Powerful), Omniscience (He is All-Knowing) and the Power of our God, that all we learn here in **Genesis 1** was determined by our God in sovereign counsel even before the foundations of the earth. And that which our God does, He does very well.

Point 2 – “God, and the *Imago Dei*, in the Beginning” (Gen 1:24-25)

Genesis 1:26a (ESV) “²⁶ Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.”

- a) **V26** Now we proceed to see that such Trinitarian consultation had specific purpose to it. We proceed now to see what it was that God considered and planned. More than that, we see here not only the consideration thereof but also its implementation. God's discussion is particularly concerning the manner after which man would be made. And God is deliberate and specific in expressing Himself by using two particular words in such deliberation – the words “**image**” and “**likeness**”.
- b) Now, beloved friends, just as the creation of the world was spread over six days for our sake that we may pause, ponder and reflect the wonder of God's creation; so now for the purpose of commending our attention to the dignity of our creation and our nature, God takes counsel pertaining the creation of man as a means of testifying that He is about to undertake something great and wonderful. And because our Lord needs no other counsellor, there can be no doubt that He consulted with Himself pertaining the creation of man. Now there are many who think that the words “**image**” and “**likeness**” are words that are distinct from each other. But Scripture strongly denies such speculation. In Hebrew the same concept is often described by means of different words for the sake of thorough explanation, and that is exactly what happens here. And the fact that Moses in **verse 27** only uses the word “**image**” and uses it twice confirms such a statement.
- c) Thus far we have been introduced to everything imaginable as created in the universe by God, in the waters of the sea, the land and the sky. And as impressive as all of creation is and as much as it highlights the glory of God and leaves every man, and woman and boy and girl without excuse; there still is nothing in all of creation that comes close to the birth and the wonder of a human being. And the greatest wonder of this is that the child is created in the image of God, in the ***Imago Dei***. Now in which way are we created in the image of God? There is no doubt that the Church fathers and the Reformers were indeed correct in viewing the image of God in us as essentially spiritual. Yet there were some Reformers who erred in saying that the image of God in us was completely destroyed at the Fall in **Genesis 3**. That's not a correct view. What was destroyed as a result of the Fall was man's original righteousness. It is that part of the image of God that was eradicated as a result of the fall, but even after the corruption of the world and the flood's judgement, man is still regarded as in the image of God.

For example, after the flood a prohibition is made in **Genesis 9:6** which reads as follows, “**Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image.**” In other words even after the flood and the fall, it remains true that man is in the image of God. The Apostle James confirms this truth in the New Testament when he writes, “**With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God.**” (**James 3:9**) So that means the image of God still persists in sinful men and women, even though it has been marred by sin; but still the image of God in man is no doubt a great wonder that holds eternal potential.

- d) Now this “**image of God**” in man must entail those aspects of human nature that are not shared by the animal kingdom. Attributes such as a moral consciousness, the ability to think abstractly, an understanding of beauty and emotion, and then above all the capacity of worshipping and loving God, are all things the animal kingdom does not possess. And it is these eternal and divine dimensions of man's being which are the essence of what is involved in the likeness of God. But it is also crucial that we see that God says in consultation with Himself, “**Let us make man in our image**”. That means man was **made**, man was **created**; it was a **deliberate** and a **particular act of God**. Now the component of man that was physically “**made**” obviously is his physical body. That must therefore mean that in some sense even man's physical body resembles the likeness of God. Now that begs a question, doesn't it? In His omnipresence, God has no physical body, for God is Spirit. So how could man's body then be made in the image of God, if God does not have a body like ours? Although God Himself may have no physical body we can assertively say that God designed man's body to enable it to function physically in ways in which He Himself could function even without a body. God can see (**Gen 16:13**), hear (**Ps 94:9**), smell (**Gen 8:21**), touch (**Gen 32:32**), and speak (**2 Pet 1:18**), whether or not He has physical eyes, ears, nose, hands and mouth. It also is significant to note that whenever God chose to appear visibly to men, He often did so in the form of a human body (**Gen 18:1-2**), and we see that when angels appeared to men they also appeared in the form of a human body (**Acts 1:10**). God chose a human body for His Son to appear in during His incarnation on earth, and that in itself tells us much of the value God places on the human body as made in the image of God.
- e) **So, we are God's image bearers**. That of course does not mean that we are gods, but it does mean we are godlike. Unlike any other creature man's make-up is a reminder of God. Friend, what does this mean for you and me? It means that above everything else in all of creation, God created us to resemble His glory. Even though all creation bears witness to the glory of God (**Ps 19:1**), humanity above all expresses and represents God. Even though original sin has marred original righteousness, all of mankind nonetheless bears witness to God. Friend, regardless of whether you are a believer or an unbeliever present here today, you need to know and hear that you are made in the likeness of Almighty God. That means He made you to live like Him; to resemble Him; to honour Him; to glorify Him; to point people to Him; to glorify Him and enjoy Him forever. And if you are not doing that you are living outside the realm of your God-given creation mandate, and that is punishable by eternal destruction. And the bottom line reality here

is actually quite straightforward – you are either living for Him or you are not – you are either living for God or living for self. And you were not created to live for self, as God's Word states in **2 Corinthians 5:15** ^{“15} and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.” Friend, who are you living for?

Point 3 – “God, creating Male and Female for Himself as the Apex of Creation, in the Beginning” (Gen 1:27)

Genesis 1:27 (ESV) ^{“27} So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.”

- a) **V27** Now you will note that I am not dealing with **verse 26b** in today's exposition. That's quite simply because **verse 26b** is dealt with extensively in **verses 28-30** and we will Lord willing consider that next Lord's Day. That being said, we want to consider the fact that Moses reveals in **verse 27** that the image of God in man consists of the fact that God created man both male and female in the beginning. The term for **“man”** is the Hebrew word *adam*, which is a generic term used in the Scriptures referring both to men and women, meaning *human race* or *humanity*. That means the man and the woman are images of God separately and they are also the image of God together. And friends, again the difference between human beings and the rest of the living creatures is highlighted in the use of the terms **“according to our likeness”** and **“in his own image”**. When speaking of the other living creatures the term employed is **“according to its kind”** (**1:11-12; 21; 24-25**). Whereas plants and animals are broken down into various types and species according to its kind, man is not broken into types. The only breakdown the Scriptures present for man is that of sexuality.
- b) Now from the point of the Hebrew language **verse 27** presents itself in a most fascinating manner. It's the first time in the Word of God that we come across Hebrew poetry. The verse consists of three lines, each containing four stresses, with a threefold repetition of the word *bara* which is the Hebrew for **“created”**. Now this you need to see is the high point towards which the creative activities in the beginning are directed. This indeed is the apex of creation.
- c) The words **“male and female”** have far reaching implications. We see further teaching on this in **Genesis 2:24**, ^{“24} Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.” Now in **Mark 10:6-7** Jesus couples **Genesis 1:27** with **Genesis 2:24** when He says, ^{“6} But from the beginning of creation, ‘God made them male and female.’ ⁷ Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, ⁸ and the two shall become one flesh.’ **So they are no longer two but one flesh.**” Doing this Jesus is ascribing value to this which is the apex of His creative acts. For defining humanity as bisexual God is making each partner the compliment of the other and is pointing to the New Testament's doctrine of the equality of the spiritual sexes - **Galatians 3:28**, ^{“28} There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

- d) Now obviously this has implications on homosexuality, lesbianism, transgenderism, feminism and so the list goes on. And the Word of God speaks clearly to these matters, but you need to see that God from the beginning set a pattern for all to follow and adhere to. Any deviance from the God-instituted creation mandate is an abomination in the sight of the Lord and is punishable in the Lake of Fire unless those guilty of such evil repent in the sight of the Lord. And to this warning we are to pay careful attention.
- e) So this account then leaves us clearly with the understanding that man and woman are glorious indeed. All that God made was good, but the creation of man and woman was indeed very good (**Gen 1:31**).

Conclusion:

- a) So then, as we consider the creation account commencing at Day One all the way through the Sixth Day we see a Sovereign Omnipotent God doing all things well and for His Glory. We see a God who in Trinitarian fashion, created light, a God who brought order out of chaos, a God who separated the waters from the waters, a God who gave vegetation to the earth, allowing seeds to exist within plants and trees for the purpose of self-perpetuation, a God who made the greater and the lesser light to rule both night and day, a God who filled the waters with swimming creatures, and the skies with flying birds and winged insects, a God who brought living creatures to the earth; and now we see this same God, here at the last act of creation making man to inhabit the earth and enjoy the bounty which God had made so very good. And we see a picture in **Genesis 1** of all being at peace with God. And God appoints man as the steward of all that He had made; this meaning man was both at peace with God and with nature in the beginning.
- b) Sadly this did not always remain so; for as we know, the Fall did come. This remains a tragedy which words cannot adequately describe. And the fall means God and man became enemies. Where all at first was at peace, now there was war. Whereas God dwelt with man in the Garden in unbroken fellowship, God now banned man from the Garden and secured the entrance to the Garden with celestial cherubim. Paradise is now lost and man is now no longer in unbroken fellowship with God. For those outside of Christ this is horrifying news; for the man outside of Christ will pay for each of his sins in eternity under the righteous hand of God's never-ending wrath.
- c) But for us who believe, we know that even though paradise was lost, our hope is in Him who will ensure that paradise is regained. Our hope is in Christ who is **"the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation"** (**Col 1:15**). Our hope is in the fact that Christ is the exact image of God's being (**Heb 1:3**) and that Christ continually pleads our case before the throne of grace. Our hope is in His overcoming of sin and death. Our hope is in His blood, and our trust is in His righteousness and not in a righteousness of our own. The First Adam failed miserably in his representation of mankind. But the Second Adam did not sin, and therefore **"¹² ...just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned... ¹⁹ For as by the one man's disobedience the many were**

made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous." (Romans 5:12 and 19).

You see, our hope is in the One Man who will make many righteous.

- d) And therefore what awaits the Christian at the consummation of time, is the likeness of Christ. We read in **1 Corinthians 15:49**, **"⁴⁹ Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven."** That means when Christ comes again, all who believe in Him will be perfected and glorified. Our sanctification will come to an end and our glorification will be in Christ, as we behold Him face to face. All that the image of God is meant to be will be seen in its fullness in all of the Redeemed. And so our hope is not in what we have to offer but our hope is in Him who is the perfect bearer of the **Imago Dei**. In Christ alone can we be complete. In Him alone is fulness of joy, and in Him alone can we find true and ultimate rest.
- e) He in whose image we are made is the One that calls all present here to bow the knee in surrender to Him alone so that unto Him alone all glory may be given.

Amen

Soli Deo Gloria

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