

# The Book of Genesis

## Genesis 1:28-31 (Prologue)

### Day 6 of Creation

#### 12<sup>th</sup> Message in The Book of Genesis

Sunday 22 September 2019

Glenvista Baptist Church

**Genesis 1:28-31 (ESV)** “<sup>28</sup> 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.” <sup>29</sup> And God said, “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. <sup>30</sup> And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so. <sup>31</sup> And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.”

### Introduction

- a) Perfectly created in the image of God; a replica of the likeness of God; man the apex of God's creation. Created on the Sixth Day in the image and likeness of God. Male and Female God created them to reflect something of the absolute glory and majesty of the One who had made them. What a wonderful God we serve.
- b) We have thus far witnessed some significant events transpire on the Sixth Day. First the creation of all sorts of land animals made each according to its kind, then the creation of man in the likeness of God. And God created the man and the woman both in His likeness. And the man was incomplete, as we will see more clearly in **Genesis 2**, and so God created for him a companion and a helpmeet, so that they both may be one.
- c) We come now to the third part of what God does on day 6 and we see that God gives a particular command to the man and the woman. And we find in this particular command to the man and the woman the first divine revelation of God to the human race. God reveals Himself to man in two ways: firstly by nature, as we read clearly in **Romans 1** (better known as natural revelation), and then secondly by means of His Word (better known as special revelation). The Psalmist makes known that “**The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows his handywork**” (**Psa 19:1**). That means the whole realm of nature outside of man speaks to man about God, and it speaks to man about God's eternal power and divine glory.
- d) Now, man made in the image of God, means man was made wonderful and the Psalmist echoes this sentiment in **Psalm 139** when he says, “<sup>13</sup> **For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb.** <sup>14</sup> **I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well.** <sup>15</sup> **My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth.** <sup>16</sup> **Your eyes saw my unformed**

substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them. <sup>17</sup> How precious to me are your thoughts, O God!”

- e) So in **Genesis 1:28-30** we have the first direct Word of God to man. The first spoken Word of God to man. And in these verses we have God's mandate or commission to the human race in terms of man's relation and responsibility to the earth. We will see in these verses that man is responsible to God as God's representative on the earth and man is to rule as king over the earth; meaning He is to have dominion over all the creatures lower than himself. And God blesses mankind on the Sixth Day, and this of course is before any entrance of sin into the world. And so come with me as we consider the commission God gave man, as consisting of a command to multiply and fill the earth with people; a command to subdue the earth and hold dominion over the creatures; and also an appointment concerning food and sustenance for man and animal.
- f) And may we once again see the big picture pointing us to a great and awesome God.

## **Point 1 – “God, giving the First Command to the First Man and Woman, in the Beginning” (Gen 1:28)**

**Genesis 1:28 (ESV)** <sup>“28</sup> 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.”

- a) **V28** You need to notice at the outset that this is the first recorded verbal proclamation of God to man in all of history. These are the very first words that ever came upon the ears of any man who has ever lived on planet earth.
- b) Now notice that these first words of God to man are in the form of a blessing, and note that this blessing contains particular instructions and a commission. This blessing of God may be regarded as the source from which the human race has flowed – for in it God gives unto man the mandate of reproduction. You see, here, Moses is quite simply informing us that mankind was made by God for the production of offspring, in order that man might replenish the earth. If God so wished He could have created the earth with the full complement of men and women right at the start of creation, but He obviously chose not to do so. Rather it was God's will that all men should proceed from one fountain, so that our desire of mutual concord might be the greater, and that each might more freely embrace the other as his own flesh. So friends, that means, **to bless**, entails not only a gift but also a function.
- c) **V28** Now the command is about being “fruitful”, “multiplying” and “filling” the earth. The Hebrew word used here is **male**, which literally means “fill”, “fulfill” or “be filled”. So that means this command brings along with it, moral responsibility, in that man as God's image-bearer, is created as a responsible, moral, spiritual being. That means man will give an account to God for what He has done with this Divine Commission. And perhaps the most amazing wonder that comes along with this commission of filling the earth is the knowledge that God has created man in a way that the offspring he brings forth are also born in the image of God. So God's command is kind of like this- “I want you to

bring along more people from you and I will ensure that all those who come from you are made in My image". Wow!! That is mind-blowing. And see how good and wise and kind God is; God not only gives the commission but He also equips man with everything needed to fulfill and honor the terms and stipulations of such commission. That is particularly why God created them "male and female". For in sovereign wisdom God so designed the male body and its organs, and the female body and its organs to mutually complement each other so that in a God-given, God-glorifying sexual union, a married man and woman can bring forth Godly offspring, as per God's design.

- d) God also commissions man to "subdue" that which God entrusts into his hands. This word suggests taking over and controlling the whole earth. This demonstrates the special place man has in God's design and that man is not only distinct from the animal order, but that man is also particularly above it. Therefore man has been given the ability to rule and reign and exercise kingship over all that is created, as man is superior to that which is created. So note though that the instruction is to "subdue" and "have dominion over" all that God has created. To have dominion raises mankind to the position of kings in that they are supreme over the created order. And notice, friends, that the command to "rule" or "have dominion" is given twice (v26 and v28) and that raises its importance. Now, it would make perfect sense that man made in the image of God, would then as ruler be called to rule like God, that in his exercise of dominion over the created order, man demonstrates the likeness of God to all.
- e) Obviously this commission to have dominion over the created order prohibits man's exploitation of creation. Man may not do as he likes; rather man is called to be like God towards the created order, and God cares for and loves that which He has created, for in it the invisible attributes of God are clearly on display. Man always has to regard the beauty and the glory of God's creation when tending that which our God has made. So, it is precisely the fact that man is under the authority of God, that man must also rule the created order under the authority of God.
- f) So friends, as a practical application this means that it is good and honorable for human beings to use creation for our benefit. Therefore a love of the animal kingdom and a love of nature is from God and glorifies God. Obviously such love may never be an inordinate love. The moment our love for what God has made supersedes our love for God, we are in trouble and we are then exhibiting the idolatry of fallen hearts. But it's good to sit beyond a quiet meadow and look up at the majestic surroundings and see God and feel at peace. It's wonderful to lie on the green grass on a mid-summer's night and look up and gaze at the stars. It's great to love your dog, and your cat and your mouse and the parakeet and whatever else you may have. It's marvelous to have a beautiful garden and enjoy keeping it like that. It's good, dear friends, to love that which God has made.
- g) **But there is one challenge though:** dominion has sadly been terribly marred by the fall; just like all other aspects of what God initially made good has been spoilt by man's sin. Unfortunately in so many ways our dominion is tainted by love for self; our dominion is harassed by sinful ideas and illicit desires for power. Rule has been made into an

autocratic existence that tramples upon things and upon others to get what I want. Rhino poaching is just one example of how man's ruling has been affected and marred by sin. And against this the believer needs to guard at all costs. But praise God that He sets out to restore man's dominion to its proper and rightful perspective throughout redemptive history. This of course beginning with the promise that One would come to crush the head of the serpent (**Gen 3:15**). The promises in the Old Testament are perpetual reminders that a Ruler would come to establish a Kingdom of Peace and that He will reign and rule as Lord and as King (**Gen 49:10-11; Num 24:17; Isa 9:6-7; Isa 11:1-16**). And Christ therefore is our Ultimate Example of One who exercises dominion. He alone is the One who fulfills the original role of dominion given to mankind and He makes it possible for humans to share in that dominion restored to them in Christ. For according to **Hebrews 2:6-9** we are reminded that, **"<sup>6</sup> It has been testified somewhere, "What is man, that you are mindful of him, or the son of man, that you care for him? <sup>7</sup> You made him for a little while lower than the angels; you have crowned him with glory and honor, <sup>8</sup> putting everything in subjection under his feet." Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control. At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him. <sup>9</sup> But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone."**

## **Point 2 – "God, providing sustenance to the First Man and to the Animals, in the Beginning" (Gen 1:29-30)**

**Genesis 1:29-30 (ESV)** **"<sup>29</sup> And God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. <sup>30</sup> And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so."**

- a) **V29** Now I find it intriguing yet simultaneously encouraging that man and animals' nourishment is part of the predetermined creative acts of God on day 6. We now come to God's second address of man. The first address was the mandate to multiply, fill and have dominion over the created order. God's second address now has to do with food, and again God has particular instructions in reference to this as well. In these verses God particularly instructs human beings concerning the food they and the animals are given to eat of. So, the Biblical record at the outset shows God looking after the bodily needs of both man and animals, and it shows that initially the diet for both was vegetarian. Now be careful, this is not stating an idealistic dream but rather it is stating the situation that existed before the Fall. In other words an assumption **could be** that vegetation was enough to sustain man before the fall, and it no doubt is a state Isaiah the prophet predicts will reign again in the New Creation when **"the lion will eat straw like the ox"** (**Isa 11:6-9; Isa 65:25**). And so, it is only after the Fall that we hear of man's eating of animals and using animals for clothing and for sacrifice (**Gen 3:21; 4:2-4; 9:3**). So there is a clear distinction presented in the Scripture – pre-fall it was vegetation only – whilst post-fall

man is permitted to eat meat. Now don't make too much of this dear friends. I don't think this is written that we build a theology upon this.

- b) And I think we would do well to pay attention to the following warning from John Calvin as to this matter: “Some infer from this passage that men were content with herbs and fruits until the Flood, and that it was even unlawful for them to eat flesh. This appears probable because God confines, in some way, the food of mankind within certain limits. Then after the Flood He specifically allows them to eat flesh. This argument however is not sufficiently strong; for it may be adduced on the opposite side that the first men offered sacrifices from their flocks. Moreover, it is the law of sacrificing in the right way not to offer to God anything except what He has granted to our use. And finally, men were clothed in skins; therefore it was lawful for them to kill animals. For these reasons I think it will be better for us to assert nothing concerning this matter. Let it suffice for us that herbs and the fruits of the trees were given them as their common food; yet it is not to be doubted that this was abundantly sufficient for their highest gratification.”<sup>1</sup>
- c) Therefore that has a modern application as well: it is not lawful to deny man to eat anything that God has made. For God has made all food good and for man's enjoyment. Now admittedly you may personally have certain preferences, but we may never bring our preferences to bear upon others. Our preferences should always have room for the preferences of others, as long as those never go beyond the bounds of Scripture. The New Testament speaks clearly to this matter. God for instance gave the Apostle Peter a vision in which He determined that all foods are clean and we read God's instruction to him in **Acts 10:15** - “**15 And the voice came to him again a second time, “What God has made clean, do not call common.”** In **Leviticus 11** we see God presenting Israel with dietary laws making known which foods were permissible to eat and which were deemed as unclean. These laws were given to the nation of Israel to set God's people apart from the nations, sanctified unto God alone so that they could stand out as the people of God. And it was after this purpose had ended that Jesus declared all foods clean – **Mark 7:18-19**, “**18 And he said to them, “Then are you also without understanding? Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile him, 19 since it enters not his heart but his stomach, and is expelled?”** (Thus he declared all foods clean.)”
- d) **Romans 14:1-23** teaches us that not everyone is mature enough in the faith to accept the fact that all foods are clean. As a result, if we are with someone who would be offended by our eating “unclean” food, we should give up our right to do so as to not offend the other person. We have the right to eat whatever we want, but we do not have the right to offend other people, even if they are wrong. For the Christian in this age, though, we have freedom to eat whatever we wish as long as it does not cause someone else to stumble in his/her faith.
- e) **V30** Now bringing this back to God's mandate here in Genesis, the issue obviously is not clean versus unclean. The real issue we need to see is that the Sovereign Creator cares enough for His creation to ensure that man and beast have sufficient to eat, and I find

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<sup>1</sup> Alister McGrath and JI Packer, *Genesis, Calvin, The Crossway Classic Commentary Series*, Crossway Publishers (2001) page 27-28

this so encouraging that this is captured as part of the process of God's works of creation. God provides sustenance for the first man and woman and for animals as a sign that He cares for what He loves. And right in the beginning God shows that He is our provider; therefore we can trust Him with our lives and we can look to Him for our daily needs and for our daily bread. He therefore taught us to pray to Him, **"<sup>11</sup> Give us this day our daily bread..."**(Matthew 6:11). So therefore we need not worry, for God has said, **"<sup>25</sup> Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? 26 Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? 27 And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? 28 And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, 29 yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. 30 But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? 31 Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' 32 For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. 33 But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. 34 "Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble" (Matthew 6:25-33).** So do you see dear friends, that the God who provided sustenance in the beginning unto the first man and unto the animals, is that very God who still cares by providing for the needs of all that He has made.

### **Point 3 – “God, finally affirming all His created works, in the Beginning” (Gen 1:31)**

**Genesis 1:31 (ESV)** **"<sup>31</sup> And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day."**

- a) **V31** Now right at the end I want you to see God's evaluation of what He has made. Moses one more time declares that God approved of everything He had made. Moses tells us God **"saw"** what He had made. God has His eyes on His creation, and it brought great pleasure to the senses of our God. God approves of what He has made, because God is good, and because God is good, everything He has made is good as well. That's a point we have seen very clearly so far in our expositions. The fact that **Genesis 1** repeats on no less than six occasions that **"God saw that it was good"** and on a seventh occasion that God saw that **"it was very good"** effectively is an indictment on man caught up in his sinfulness. God says it seven times so that you and I can get the picture; or else we would simply fail to see how grand creation truly is. And just in case we miss how good it is – God stresses right at the end of creation that **"it was very good"**. It is the Hebrew word **meod**, and it stresses the degree of the goodness of God's perfected creation.
- b) So Moses wants to highlight here that even though God on each of the days stresses that what He has made is good, His particular rendering of it on the last day of creation denotes a completeness. It notes that all is done. It is, if you want, the last finishing touch of God upon His handiwork. God stands back and looks and is utterly satisfied with all



He has made. The fact that God pronounces it “**very good**” is that we may know there is in the symmetry of God’s deeds the highest perfection, to which nothing can be added.

## Conclusion:

- a) So then, friends, this is our God, a God who made all things well. A God who cares and a God who provides. A God who entrusts kingship unto man. A God who makes man accountable and a God who makes all things in line with the very perfection of His own glory and beauty. This is our God!
- b) But note particularly – a God who makes man accountable to Him. A day is coming in which all men will account for the deeds done in the flesh, and that is true for you and me. **2 Corinthians 5:10**, “**<sup>10</sup> For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.**” And this day will be a day in which Christ will repay each man according to his works, for the Apostle Paul writes in **Romans 2:6-11**, “**<sup>6</sup> He will render to each one according to his works: <sup>7</sup> to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; <sup>8</sup> but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury. <sup>9</sup> There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, <sup>10</sup> but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. <sup>11</sup> For God shows no partiality.**”
- c) The work you and I are called to do is repent of our wicked ways and believe in Him who alone holds the keys to eternal life. What will you do? Will you believe in His works; the One who has revealed Himself through nature but particularly through His Son. Do the only work that pleases Him: Repent and believe on the Lord Jesus.

Amen

Soli Deo Gloria

Sunday 22 September 2019

Glenvista Baptist Church