

Genesis 1:24-31

The sixth day of Creation opened with God commanding the earth to bring forth the beasts of the field.

Read Genesis 1:24-25.

Verse 24 paints a picture of the beasts issuing forth from the ground, but even if that were the means by which the deed was accomplished, v25, as well as v2:19, make clear that it was God's hand doing it.

Read Genesis 2:19.

Now, in the second part of this last day, God will create the beings He will leave in charge of things on the earth.

Read Genesis 1:26-30.

v26-27

Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness, so that they will have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." And God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

In just two sentences, a mere 74 words, it is stated *four times* that God—in the plural *Elohim*—created man, male and female. Such repetition is not to be ignored when used in God's word; it is there for a reason. In just about every sense the creation of man is distinguished from every other created thing or being as something special, important, set apart from the rest—even dominant. And it is worth our time to examine just *how* this difference—this contrast—is expressed.

Now it is Personal

Look at the earlier steps of creation, beginning at

v3: Let there be...

v6: Let there be...

v9: Let the waters...

v11: Let the earth sprout...

v14: Let there be lights...

v20: Let the waters swarm...

v24: Let the earth bring forth...

All of these Creation steps are expressed in an impersonal third-person voice. But now, in v26, we have, for the first time, God speaking in a more personal, first-person voice: “Let Us make man...”

A Kind Different from all the Rest

From vv11-25 the vegetation, trees, and all the creatures of the sea and land are created according to “their [or its] kind,” or species. In our last session I pointed out the rhythm of v25:

God made
the beasts of the earth
after their kind,
and the cattle
after their kind,
and every creeping thing of the ground
after its kind;
and God saw that it was good.

But the creature called “man” (literally the Hebrew *a-dam*) will be different; he will be made not just of a kind different from the rest—as an ape is of a kind different from a flower—but only man will be made “in [God’s] image” (as Albert Mohler loves to express in the Latin, “the *imago Dei*). ➡

Sexes

Thus far in the Creation account—even with the animals—there has been no mention of two sexes. It may be implied, and may be inferred by the reader, but it is not mentioned. With the creation of humans, however, it is explicit: “male and female He created them.”

“man”

If we are not surprised that God would name the first man with the word that means “man” (*a-dam*), we may be surprised that a close cognate of that word (*adamah*) is used in v25 and is translated “ground,” meaning soil capable of cultivation. Thus the word and name for the first human would mean “cultivator of the soil.” Hence, the first man was created to be a farmer.

Dominion (rule, have preeminence)

Only man, created in the image of God, is to have dominion on earth, over all other living creatures (v28). In addition, the vegetation and fruit of the trees has been created—initially, at least—as food for man and beast (vv29-30).

v26

So let's now take a closer look at v26. In v26 the one word translated "Let Us make", *naaseh* (aw-SAH), is not (as I pointed out last time) the *doing*, but the discussion and establishing of the *purpose behind* the doing in v27. This is the Godhead, as it were, sitting around the conference table, working out the details for the next and most profound step of the Creation. This is stated in the first person, plural: the *Godhead* will do this.

Again, heretofore the fullness of the Godhead's work in Creation has been implied, or suggested with subtlety; here the participation of the second and third members is explicit.

Just as in v1, the Hebrew *Elohim* is masculine, plural, absolute; Leupold calls it a "potential" plural. By this He means that we go too far to conclude that this is a purposeful reference, by Moses, to the Trinity as we know it—but we also go too far to conclude that there is no reference at all here to the Trinity.

Leupold: The term 'Elohîm...allows for all that which the fuller unfolding of the same old truth brings in the course of the development of God's Kingdom. When, then, ultimately the truth concerning the Trinity has been revealed, the fullest resources of the term 'Elohîm have been explored, as far as man needs to know them.

We might think of this as a placeholder of sorts; we could explain it this way: Moses himself could not know the fullness of the Triune Godhead, but the Spirit had him use a word for God that would permit that fullness to be realized by those who would follow—especially after the Incarnation.

...according to Our likeness, so that they will have dominion...

Then Elohim makes an extraordinary, radical, cosmic decision—and even includes the *reason* for it: Man—and only man—will be created in the likeness of God. Two words are used to express this:

image = tselem

This is a word commonly used to refer to idols, statues formed by human hands to represent a pagan god, as in 2 Chronicles—

And all the people came to the house of Baal and tore it down, and his altars and his images they broke in pieces, and they killed Mattan the priest of Baal before the altars.
(2 Chronicles 23:17)

—or painted images:

“So she increased her harlotries. And she saw men portrayed on the wall, images of the Chaldeans portrayed with vermilion,”
(Ezekiel 23:14)

At its root the word means something carved, cut off or cut out. That is, something formed to look like something else. In the Greek (*eikon*), as used in 1 Corinthians 11:7, it means essentially the same.

For a man ought not to have his head covered, since he is the image and glory of God, but the woman is the glory of man.

likeness = demut (dee-MOOT)

This word is similar, but has a different shading. It means a resemblance in outward appearance, similitude, in the same pattern. Based on its use in Exodus 20:4, Wilson adds, that this word includes the idea of “a representation of that which is not visible.”

Guzik: The terms for image and likeness are slightly different. Image has more to do with appearance, and likeness has more to do with an abstract similarity, but they both essentially mean the same thing here in this context.

We can draw some inferences from God’s use of these two words.

- This does *not* mean that, like God, man is deity. God is spirit-kind, and man is flesh-kind. But it *does* mean that man alone of all creatures is made to have a relationship with God. Only he (the corporate “he”) is compatible with God’s indwelling Spirit.

- Just as a carved image of a pagan god reflects the image of that god, man is meant to reflect the image of his Creator.
- Since man is flesh-kind and God is spirit-kind (John 4:24), we cannot say that being made in His image means that we literally *look* like God. So being made in His image must mean something more intrinsic: we are made with a capacity to know Him, to yearn for Him, to communicate with Him and to worship Him, and, not least, to be His temple on earth (1 Corinthians 3:16-17).
- This alone—being made in the image of God—is sufficient to set human beings apart from every other created being or thing on earth. Man’s relationship to God is unique in all Creation—including God’s created angels.

I was taken by something Leupold writes regarding God’s creation of man.

Leupold: Taking the verse as a whole, we cannot but notice that it sets forth the picture of a being that stands on a very high level, a creature of singular nobility and endowed with phenomenal powers and attributes, not a type of being that by its brute imperfections is seen to be on the same level with the animal world, but a being that towers high above all other creatures, their king and their crown.

And my response to this was, *How far we have fallen*—both in the perverse culture of this world, and in our self-perception. Over the millennia man has “fallen” not just in his rebellion against God in the Garden, but that rebellion has corrupted his God-ordained stature in Creation. Man was initially created to be a high being, ruling over all other creatures, things, and aspects of this world. Note the extent to which things have reversed, as a fair portion of this society places the well-being of nature, of climate and weather, of the earth itself over the well-being of humans; how nations such as China have purposely limited human reproduction—to their doom. Now they are experiencing existential societal problems because they do not have enough people, as well as a gross lack of women for all the men in their society.

In the Garden first Eve and then Adam believed the lie that man knew better than God. Today, many thousands of years later, we are still believing the same lie, that man must subjugate himself for the benefit of the rest of Creation. That is not God’s order.

v27

And God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

If v26 is the planning, v27 is the execution of the plan. Here male and female humans are created “in the image of God”—and let me add one more thought on this.

Read Colossians 3:9-10.

Moses may not have foreseen this, but in Christ we understand that the process of sanctification—of becoming more like Christ—is the process of every Christian returning to the state in which Adam and Eve were first made: in the image of their Creator. Spiritually we are all born in the “image” (as it were) of our fallen forefather, Adam. But in Christ we are set out on the road to return to Adam’s pristine state. *Positionally*, in Christ, we are already there; *practically*, we will not attain until we see our Lord face to face.

Note the multiplicity of “one” invested in vv26-28:

- In v26, God (*Elohim*) says “Let **Us** make **man** in **Our** image.”
- Though *Elohim* is plural, it implies one being speaking to other beings—i.e., *let Us agree to make man like Us*.
- “Man” is singular, though the same word (*adham*) is also used for “mankind.”
- In v27 Elohim “created man in **His** own image”—not *their* image—followed by “God created **him**; **male and female He** created **them**.”

We see here a holy co-mingling of singular and plural, of a “three-in-one” Trinity stated as “He,” and the unity of male and female in the term “man.” And for once John Sailhamer contributes something worthwhile.

Sailhamer: Following this clue the divine plurality expressed in v26 is seen as an anticipation of the human plurality of the man and woman, thus casting the human relationship between man and woman in the role of reflecting God’s own personal relationship with Himself.

One more pertinent thought from David Guzik—especially for today—on this creation of man and woman.

Guzik: It is vain to wonder if men or women are superior to the other. A man is absolutely superior at being a man. A woman is absolutely superior at being a woman. But when a man tries to be a woman or a woman tries to be a man, you have something inferior.

v28

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 sky and over every living thing that creeps on the earth.”

We might like to isolate this verse and think that having God’s blessing makes us special. But back in v22 God blessed the creations of day five: the creatures in the sea and the flying creatures of the expanse. He not only blessed them, but gave the same directive to them as he does to man: “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill [their respective domains].” Beyond this, God will favor the seventh day—the day of rest—with His blessing. So what does it mean that God “blessed” certain portions of His Creation?

Ultimately the reason for this blessing extends beyond the scope of this study, tying in with the “blessings” thread regarding Israel and the Law. But pertinent to this study is the fact that God’s blessing is linked—in both passages—to reproduction.

Yet I question the conclusion of some commentators that this blessing from God *makes operative* reproduction, for He does not give the same blessing to “the beasts of the earth” in the sixth day; He calls their creation “good,” and they do indeed propagate, but He does not “bless” them.

Adam Clarke: [This blessing] marked them as being under his especial protection, and gave them power to propagate and multiply their own kind on the earth.

The Hebrew word itself (*barek*; bay-ROCK) is little help, since it is a flexible word used in various situations, but first of all means to kneel down in praise—and it is hard to imagine that that is what God is doing here with His creation. There is another word commonly translated bless or blessed (*asre*; ash-RAY) that would seem to be a better fit. This word refers to a happiness from walking in righteousness, as in Psalm 1:1—

How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked...

—and Proverbs 8:32.

**“So now, O sons, listen to me,
For blessed are they who keep my ways.”**

Again, ultimately this establishes the roots for what will come later for Israel. And perhaps there we might find our solution. Let’s look at what “the angel of Yahweh”—i.e., the pre-incarnate Christ—said to Abraham after He stopped him from slaying Isaac.

Read Genesis 22:15-18.

Quite a few commentators interpret the blessing in 1:28 as *empowering* man to “be fruitful and multiply”—i.e., that without the blessing he would have been incapable—but I would suggest that the blessing is more God’s formal benediction for future success and prosperity. As we see in the story of Esau and Jacob, both sons were zealous for Isaac’s blessing, but Jacob—the lesser son—obtained it through subterfuge. Upon discovering that their father’s blessing had been given to his brother instead of him, Esau was left bereft of all hope.

And Esau said to his father, “Do you have only one blessing, my father? Bless me, even me also, O my father.” So Esau lifted his voice and wept. (Genesis 27:38)

Why did Esau weep so? Because he knew that without the blessing his life would be a mere shadow of what his brother's would be. It would be Jacob who would rule over him; it would be Jacob who Yahweh would cause to thrive, both in wealth and descendants.

I would say that the blessing of Genesis 1:28 is not a *command*, as some interpret it, but a *promise* that man would indeed “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 sky and over every living thing that creeps on the earth.” To put it another way, all of that is the *content* of the blessing, the promise from God that man *would* thrive and have dominion over all on the earth.

Next week we will return to v28 and finish Day Six of Creation.

SESSION 13

The Final Day of Creation, *part two* Genesis 1:24-31

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