

THE PINNACLE OF GOD'S CREATION

1 ²⁶And God said, Let us make man in our image, in our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth. ²⁷So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. ²⁸And God blessed them and 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 upon the earth.

²⁹And God said, I have given you every seed-bearing plant which is upon the surface of the whole earth, and every tree that bears fruit with seed in it; to you they shall be for food. ³⁰And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the heavens, and to everything that creeps upon the earth, in which there is life, I have given every green plant for food; and it was so. ³¹And God saw everything that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

2 And the heavens and the earth were finished, and all that they contained. ²And on the seventh day God finished his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. ³And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it; because in it he rested from all his work which God had created and made. ⁴This is an account* of the heavens and of the earth when they were created. (Gen. 1:26-2:4a)

*Literally, "These are the generations"

I. Man is the Pinnacle of God's Creation (Genesis 1:26-31)

Man Made in the Image of God

The creation of man does not take place through a word addressed by God to the earth, (in contrast to the creative act reported in verse 24,) but as the result of the divine decree, "*Let us make man in our image, in our likeness.*" This proclaims at the very outset the distinction and pre-eminence of man above all the other creatures of the earth.¹

The divine commentary that man is created "*in our image, in our likeness,*" asserts the fact that man is closely patterned after his Maker. Man is not only made after the deliberate plan and purpose of God, (God having taken counsel with Himself and thereupon declaring His intention, "*Let us make man,*") he is also very definitely patterned after Him: made "*in the image and likeness of God.*"²

How exactly are we to define the term, "*the image of God,*" what does it mean? Luther says: I understand this image of God to be ... that Adam not only knew

¹ Keil & Delitzsch, pp. 61-62.

² C.H. Leupold, p. 88.

God and believed in Him that He was gracious; but that he also led an entirely godly life.³ To “know God”—to have the capacity to interact with God—and to lead “an entirely godly life”—a life that is God-centered and is a true reflection of the moral nature of God—appears to be the essence of what it means to be made in “the image of God.”

Worship is the key evidence of the spiritual quality of the human race, and the universality of worship is evidenced in altars, temples, and religious relics of all kinds. Burial of dead, use of tools, or even painting do not qualify as evidence of the spirit, for non-spirit beings such as bower birds, elephants, and chimpanzees engage in such activities to a limited extent.⁴

Given Dominion over the Creation

“Let them have dominion,” comes from the Hebrew verb **רָדַף** signifying “to trample down” or “to master.” The breadth of the domain to be ruled by man is expressed by the various spheres of man’s dominion that are now enumerated: *“let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over the cattle.”*⁵ Man’s dominion, indeed, is to extend over “the whole earth.” This would include man’s mastery of the powers of nature, physical, electrical, chemical, physiological and the like. Whatever true scientific endeavor has produced comes under this broad charter that the Creator has given to man. The closing statement, the broadest of all, mounts to a climax in the words, *“over everything that moves about upon the earth.”* Every type of being is to be subservient to man.⁶

Created Male and Female

By their own interpersonal relationship within marriage, the man and woman would be enabled to experience some reflection of God's own interpersonal relationship within the Trinity. The one and only Son *“dwells in the bosom of the Father”* (Jn. 1:18), and He declares, *“I and the Father are one”* (Jn. 10:30.)

Furthermore, the intimacy of the marriage relationship would serve as a model of the relationship that would be established between the LORD and His people whom the Scriptures designate as being His “bride” (cp. Eph. 5:31-32),

For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. ³²This is a profound mystery, now I am speaking about Christ and the church. (Eph. 5:31-32)

³ C.H. Leupold, p. 89.

⁴ Ross, Hugh, *Creation and Time*, NAVPRESS, Colorado Springs, CO, 1994; p. 141.

⁵ H.C. Leupold, pp. 91-92.

⁶ H.C. Leupold, p. 92.

Finally, the fact that human beings have been created by God as male and female indicates that such phenomenon as homosexuality and same-sex marriage are deviant forms of behavior and deviant societal relationships, deviating from the design and pattern established by our Creator.

II. The Creation is Destined for a Glorious Consummation (Genesis 2:1-3)

God's Rest

The statement made in Genesis 2:2a, *“And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had made,”* is explained by means of the following two clauses: *“God rested on the seventh day”* (2:2b) and *“God blessed the seventh day”* (2:3a.) In other words, we are to understand the completion of God’s work to consist, negatively in the cessation of the work of creation, and positively in the blessing of the seventh day.

The cessation of God’s creative activity itself formed part of the completion of the work. God completed the creation of the world with all its inhabitants by ceasing to produce anything new.⁷ The seventh day marked the completion of God’s special creative work, but it does not imply inactivity. Although God’s work of creation is done, He continues His work of providence—preserving and governing His creation. Calvin writes, “Inasmuch as God sustains the world by His power, governs it by His providence, cherishes and even propagates all creatures, He is constantly at work.”⁸ We may also take note of the testimony of our Lord Jesus Christ. In giving His reason for performing a work of healing on the Sabbath day, Jesus declared, *“My Father is working even until now, and so I am working”* (Jn. 5:17.)

The specific way in which God blessed the seventh day was by sanctifying it—setting it apart from the other six days as a special day of rest. The New Testament interprets this Sabbath rest, (initiated by God at the conclusion of His work of creation and instituted as a weekly ordinance for His Old Testament people, see Ex. 20:8-11,) as being a model and foretaste of the heavenly rest God’s people shall share with Him in the eternal kingdom of heaven.

The Promise of Eternal Rest

The New Testament interpretation of the seventh day rest is given in the Book of Hebrews:

He has said somewhere concerning the seventh day, “And God rested on the seventh day from all his works.” ... So there remains a Sabbath rest for the

⁷ Keil & Delitzsch, p. 68.

⁸ D.G. Hagopian, ed.; p. 245.

people of God. ... Let us therefore be diligent to enter into that rest, ... (Heb. 4:4,9,11)

According to this inspired New Testament commentary on Genesis 2:2, the seventh day itself is equated with the Sabbath rest (the heavenly rest) that awaits the people of God, and this Sabbath rest is an ongoing, eternal reality. The absence of the evening-morning formula at the conclusion of the seventh day marks this day as unique in that it has no end. The Genesis Creation Account consists of six historical days followed by the seventh day, which is both historical and a type of the eternal; or, to say it another way, six earthly days followed by the seventh day, which is both earthly and a type of the heavenly.

The teaching of Scripture is that the original creation was destined for a Sabbath consummation, as the picture of the creation week as a workweek ending in the divine rest on the seventh day indicates. This Sabbath consummation would be the state in which heaven and earth become one, with God's people entering into His eternal, heavenly rest, and enjoying His immediate presence as they worship the LORD their God and fellowship with Him.

Adam, if he had passed the test of obedience, would have brought about this consummation. Adam's disobedience did not cancel or nullify that original hope, but it did bring about the need for the remedial work of redemption for its ultimate accomplishment. That work of redemption was carried out by none other than the very Son of God Himself in His incarnate capacity as the "Second Adam," rendering unto the LORD God the complete obedience that Adam failed to offer (see Rom. 5:17 printed below.)

If, by the trespass of the one man [Adam], death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ. (Rom. 5:17)

The Fall, and God's subsequent work of redemption, serve as an occasion for the LORD God to display His wisdom and grace: His wisdom in having conceived of a plan of redemption, His grace in having actually provided that plan of redemption.

Thus Scripture promises that, by means of God's work of redemption and His final act of judgment at the end of this present age, there shall emerge a renewed and transformed creation (note 2 Pet.3:10-13 printed below)

But the day of the LORD will come like a thief. On that day the heavens will disappear with a loud noise, and the elements will be destroyed by being burned up, and the earth together with the works that are in it will be exposed ... ¹³But, according to his promise, we are watching for a new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness resides. (2 Pet. 3:10-13)

Appendix: What Separates Man from the Animals?

According to Genesis, the distinguishing feature of humanity is our spiritual nature. The spirit distinguishes the human race as the one and only earthly species aware of God and with the innate desire and capacity for a relationship with Him. The one convincing evidence of this unique spiritual quality must have something to do with worship. All known human societies, wherever and whenever they have existed, however large or small, technologically sophisticated or not, have engaged in religious worship involving temples, altars, icons, and other unique relics.

Anthropologists usually identify other characteristics, such as burial practices, tool use, art, and music as expressions of the spirituality of humans. Certainly human beings can and do express worship through music, art, tools, and burial practices, but these forms of expression do not always represent worship. We can think of examples from each of these categories of expression that have nothing to do with worship but rather express our emotions or our minds, the characteristics we hold in common with the birds and mammalian species. Keen observers of nature know that bower birds, elephants, chimpanzees, gorilla, and zebra finches engage in music, tool use, art, and even burial practices.

Bipedal, tool-using, comparatively large-brained primates (called hominids by anthropologists) may have roamed Earth as long ago as 1.5 million years, but religious relics and altars date back only as far as twenty-four thousand years at most, and art containing indisputable spiritual content just five thousand years. Thus, the archeological date for the beginning of spirit expression agrees with the biblical date.⁹

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⁹ H. Ross, *The Genesis Question*; p. 110.

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