

The Creation of the Man and the Woman

Genesis 1:26-31

²⁶ Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

²⁷ So God created man in his own image,
in the image of God he created him;
male and female he created them.

²⁸ God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

²⁹ Then God said, "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food."³⁰ And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air and all the creatures that move on the ground--everything that has the breath of life in it--I give every green plant for food." And it was so.

³¹ God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning--the sixth day.

God Expresses His Intention - v. 26

What was God about to make (v. 26a)? _____

What would be unique about the nature of this "creature"? What would it be "patterned" after (v. 26a)?

- Note the expression, "Let *us* make man..." God is saying this to *himself*. In the context of this passage, there is no creature mentioned, who has the ability for conscious reflection - much less a creature who could be an advisor or a "co-creator" with God! Though we could possibly speculate that heavenly creatures might have been created by Day 6, they are not mentioned anywhere in the context as having anything to do with what God was doing on the earth. (More about the word "us," later.)

What would be the unique "job description" for this "creature"? What would he be told to do (v. 26b)? _____

- To do this job, he (they) would have authority over the entire inhabited earth. This would obviously require help - the reason for the command, "Be fruitful and increase in number," in verse 28a!
- What they would do has similarity to what God does. Yet there are also differences: God rules over *all* creation; humans, as God's "image bearers," would rule over *part* of it.
- The word "man" parallels the word "them," in the second half of the verse. This is significant and is explained further, in verse 28.

THE IMAGE /LIKENESS OF GOD - what does it mean?

Man was created to be *like* God in character, purpose, and (to some extent) nature. The big difference is this: Whereas God (the Creator) has these attributes to an *infinite* degree, humans (created beings) have them to a *finite* degree. We *reflect* God; we are made in his *image*. But we aren't "gods," except in a figurative or symbolic sense. (See Psalm 82:1,6 for an example.) Furthermore, the relationship cannot be reversed: We cannot define God as a reflection of *our* image - something that sinful humans often try to do.

Perhaps the best way to summarize what "bearing God's image" means is this: Man was made to be as much like God as is possible, for a created being. This would apply to both male and female, and would include:

- their mental capacities - an ability to have conscious reflection, and to make rational, free choices
- their moral capacities - an ability to distinguish right from wrong, and to make moral choices
- their spiritual capacities - an awareness of God, and an ability to interact with him

It is because of these capacities, that humans were given authority over the other creatures on the earth, and over the earth itself (v. 26b, 28).

When sin entered the world, these capacities were distorted, but not fully destroyed. Before sin, people reflected God's nature *finitely* (rather than *infinitely*); but now they also reflect it *imperfectly*. It is only through Christ, that our ability to reflect God's nature can be restored to what it was intended to be. (This is an ongoing process and will be completed at the resurrection.)

There are some ways in which *all creation* reflects God's glory, power and "divine nature" (Psalm 19:1, Romans 1:20), but even these capacities are influenced by the consequences of human sin. They will be restored at the resurrection (Romans 8:20-22), at the same time that *our* restoration is made complete.

God Fulfills His Intention - v. 27-28

First, God creates humans (v. 27)

What did God do (v. 27a)? _____

- The main focus in this verse is not on their *bodies*, but on their "*image-bearing*" nature. The bodies were also made, but more detail is given to that aspect in chapter 2.
- Note the differences in the words that are used to describe the various aspects of man's creation. Here, the focus is on the "image bearers" being *created*. In contrast, in chapter 2, the man's body is described as being *formed* from the ground (2:7) and the woman's body as being *fashioned* from part of the man (2:22-23).

The three lines of v. 27 express *parallel* thoughts. The first line uses the word "man."

In the second line, what *word* is used in place of the word "man" (v. 27b)? _____

In the third line, what *phrase* is used in its place (v. 27c)? _____

- In this third line, the concept that parallels the word "man" includes *both* male and female. It is because *God* defined the word this way (both as a *singular* noun and as a *collective* noun) that most languages (past and present) use the word this way. The modern hostility to the use of the word "man" in reference to *male and female* - mainly in Western societies - is an expression of rebellion against this concept.
- The creation of male and female are described in greater detail in Genesis 2:4-25, and explains the relationship between the two (especially within the context of marriage). This concept is developed further in the rest of Scripture.

Second, God tells humans what they are to do (v. 28)

- Verse 28 is only a summary. Some additional details are recorded in chapter 2, and the concept is further developed, elsewhere in the Scriptures.
- Note that this command is described as a "blessing" for the humans (v. 28a).

PART 1 of this blessing involves the humans themselves. Three phrases are used to describe what they were to do, and the extent of it. What blessing (command) were they given, concerning themselves (v. 28a)?

PART 2 of this blessing involves the earth. What were they to do with the earth (v. 28b)?

PART 3 of this blessing involves the animals. What were they to do with the animals (v. 28a)? [Verse 26 applies this also to the earth.]

Sexuality and the issue of "Man" vs. "Male and Female"

God did not create sexuality for the sole purpose of making children, or providing physical oneness between male and female - though these are important. He created it to *teach* us, through a physical activity, about various spiritual truths, and about various non-physical aspects of life and reality. He also created it to *reflect the nature of his own being*.

In Scripture, God is described as a "unity" and *at the same time* a "plurality" - "one" and "three." So also, man is described as "unity" and "plurality" - "man" (v. 27a) and "male and female" (v. 27c). Within marriage, the "two" are *at the same time* "one" (Genesis 2:24). However, as with the other ways that humans (and all creation) reflect various aspects of God, this is only a finite reflection of the infinite nature of God. The "two" do not share absolutely *all* aspects of "oneness" in a marriage - especially now that sin has entered the world.

In Genesis 1:26, God says, "Let *us* (plural) make man..." In verse 27, it reads, "So God (singular) created man..." This is fully compatible with the nature of God, as "unity and plurality." There is some debate as to whether or not this was the actual intent of these phrases. However, it does parallel the "unity and plurality" statements about man, which are found in these verses: "Let us make *man* (singular)... and let *them* (plural) rule..." (v. 26); and "God created *man* (singular) ... male and female he created *them* (plural).

About the words "Subdue" and "Rule"

These words do *not* give people the permission to misuse and destroy the environment. They were to learn about it, work with it and use it in a way that reflected *God's* character - a way that honored God and benefitted other people. Implied here (and developed further in Scripture) is *everything* that can be legitimately done with creation. What are these things? In modern terminology, we could describe these things something like this:

- 1) everything that is a legitimate part of science and technology,
- 2) coupled with the more artistic or aesthetic dimensions of creation (the God who created functionality also created beauty),
and
- 3) done in a way that honors God and builds up other people.

Two examples of this are given in Genesis 2 (working in the garden and learning about the animals). Yet since each person has different gifts and abilities, and the very "context of life" changes from generation to generation, Scripture has a greater focus on teaching *principles* - the mental framework and foundation that makes doing this possible. It also teaches us that, because of sin, it is now our nature to do the *opposite* - to do these things the wrong way (often in a very destructive way). Human effort, by itself, can perhaps suppress some of the detrimental aspects of human nature. But it is only through Christ (and submission to the Word

of God), that we can begin to change back to what God intended, when he made us. This change can begin now, but will not be *fully* complete until Christ returns and restores all things. Until then, even our *best* efforts will be tainted. (See Hebrews 2:5-9 and Romans 8:18-23.)

Is work a "blessing"?

All of these things mentioned in v. 28 are described as a "blessing." This includes the part of the command that involves *work*. The unpleasant aspects of work did not exist until *after* humans sinned. When that happened, every aspect of this blessing was affected by the well-deserved judgment of God (Genesis 3:16-19). Conditions are made even worse by the sins that people commit against each other (including the *sin* of laziness), and by the way they treat the rest of creation.

A Final Blessing, and the Conclusion of a Busy Week - v. 29-31

One more blessing (v. 29-30)

What was this blessing? _____

Who was it for? _____

- Many changes occurred when sin entered the world (Genesis 3) and destroyed the right relationships that existed between the creatures. The poisonous aspects of plants would have developed as one of the consequences of sin. Also, meat-eating and blood-sucking animals would have developed those characteristics at that time.
- Animals were not given as a source of food for humans, until after the Flood (Genesis 9:3).

The final evaluation of it all - v. 31

What was God's description of all that he had done (v. 31)? _____

How did things get the way they are today?

Things radically changed when the man and the woman chose to sin. Now, *both* live in ways that cause conflict and pain, not only with each other, but also with the entire creation they were supposed to rule over.

We live in an age of rebellion - first, against God, second, against other people. This rebellion permeates to the very core of our being, and distorts our whole framework for interpreting reality. God described the nature of the relationships between male and female, and between humans and creation, as "very good." Yet today, people's thoughts and actions have become so distorted, that the relationships (as they are described in Genesis) are often viewed as "*not* good," or sometimes even as "a great evil." Even the *words* used to describe these relationships (such as, "subdue" or "helper," or in the New Testament, "submit") have become so distorted, that, to many people, they *never* convey something "very good."

The relationship between the man and the woman (husband and wife) is a good illustration of this. Consider the following description of their relationship, as God defined it. How often do you hear people describe that relationship this way?

- God created the man and the woman to work together as *one*, neither against the other, with the man as the leader and the woman as the helper. Since there was no sin, there was no competition and no attempt for either to promote self-serving interests, to the detriment of the other. *Both* were attempting to obey God, working together, each with abilities that complemented the other.

How should we respond to all these broken and distorted relationships? How should we interact with each other and with all of creation? Throughout Scripture, we can find instructions and examples that illustrate the right way for people to interact (in *any* type of relationship). We can also see examples of *wrong* ways for people to interact. (The context will show us which is which.) We need to learn from what Scripture says, and begin to do things the right way.