

“CREATED IN THE IMAGE OF GOD”

GENESIS 1:26

Pastor Keith E. Gephart

INTRODUCTION

So what difference is there between man and animal? Why is man so special? Why is man especially responsible? The answer is found in the Biblical concept of man being created in the image of God.

YOU MUST KNOW THAT YOU ARE UNIQUE, AND THAT YOU MUST THEREFORE BE UNIQUELY DIFFERENT TO GOD’S GLORY.

As we continue looking at the 6th day of creation, we note that God has already created all of the animals. Now, before He finishes that last part of the 6th day’s work, He makes a consultation with His heavenly Council. What He was about to do is **very important**.

This passage shows us three reasons why man is distinct from and preeminent over all of animal creation:

- 1) God *took counsel* instead of making a fiat—command.
- 2) God made man *in His own image and likeness*—note that none of the already created forms of animal life were suitable for Adam for companionship—Gen. 2:20; their natures were too different.
- 3) Man was *given authority* over the Earth and all of its creatures.

Man is not just another animal! Nor did he evolve from animals. He was **directly** created by God! Notice the emphasis on the word “create” in v. 27: used 3 times.

In this message we focus on the first two reasons for man’s distinctness; in the next message the final one.

I. MAN WAS CREATED AFTER GOD ENTERED INTO DIVINE COUNCIL

Notice other Biblical references to divine councils:

- A. Psalm 2:7—“Thou art my Son, This day I have begotten Thee.”
- B. Psalm 110:1—“The Lord said unto my Lord, “Sit down at my right hand until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool.”
- C. Isaiah 48:16—“The Lord sent Me and His Spirit.”
- D. John 17:24—“You [the Father] loved Me before the foundation of the World.”
- E. Matthew 11:27—“No one knows the Son but the Father, and neither does anyone know the Father but the Son.”

You see, God was not caught by surprise once He created the world. He is the sovereign designer and controller of all things.

Why not submit your life to Him and willingly let Him have control?

And now we see His creation council:

- F. Gen. 1:26—“Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness....’”

II. GOD MADE MAN IN HIS OWN IMAGE AND LIKENESS.

A. The meaning of “Let us create.”

1. “Plural of Majesty—a polite form of address used by kings etc.
 - Same things often done by preachers, politicians, etc.: “We went to such a church and we saw great results.”
 - This usage is unknown to the Hebrew.

2. "Reflective Plural"
 - One may appear to himself as both giving orders, and carrying them out.
 - This is purely imaginary and stilted reasoning!
 - In such cases, God uses the singular as in Gen. 2:18; cf. Ps. 12:5; Is. 33:10.
3. "Communicative Plural"—an address to the angels who were round about Him and constituted His council. [This interpretation is favored by many and has much in its favor—yet has some issues.]
 1. We have some examples in Gen. 11:7; Is. 6:8; I K. 22:19, 22; cf. also the reference to angels in His presence in Job 1 38:7; Dan. 7:10; etc.
 2. Arguments against this view:
 - God does not need the advice of angels, and never actually councils with them. [But, what is the difference between seeking their advice as in I K. 22 and consulting with them? The above references could be called "councils" as well as Gen. 1:26]
 - Nothing has been revealed about the creation of angels; but, we have already seen Scriptural indication that they were present at creation—such as Job 38:7.
 - The Bible clearly states that angels did not participate in man's creation: Gen. 2:7, 22; Is. 40:12-15—**esp. v. 13-14**; 44:24—by Himself, all alone! [*But, in council with others not every member of the discussion participates in the resulting effort. But they do support and approve His efforts and work to sustain them once He is finished. Moreover, He shows respect for them by including them in the discussion.*]
 - Man was not made in the image of angels! 1:27 clearly says, "His own image, image of God" and three times says that **God did it**. See 5:1 also. [True. But some would argue that angels are part of the whole picture—yet all centers in the divine personage.
 - There is much to commend this position, yet it still falls short of meeting every objection fully.]
4. "Potential Plural—the fullness of His potentialities is expressed (as in the name Elohim)
 - In the deepest and fullest sense, God speaks with Himself and of Himself in the plural number with reference to the fullness of the divine powers and essence He possesses.
 - He presents the truth which is at the foundation of the Trinitarian view—i.e. that these potentialities concentrated in His divine being are more than mere powers and attributes of God. They are persons within the Godhead.
 - This fact becomes clearer in the course of God's revelation.
 - The truth of the Trinity explains this passage.
 - Since neither Gen. 1:26 nor 11:7 mentions angels, this view must be used in connection with number 3 in order to fully explain the phenomenon.

B. What did God Make?

- "Man"—the root is Adamah—i.e. "ground, soil" from which his name "Adam" is derived.
- Man was to be the cultivator of the soil.

C. What is the Image and Likeness of God?—Man is patterned after God!

1. Meaning of the words

- a. "Image"—from the root meaning "to carve, or cut off." It refers to more concrete similarity.
- b. "Likeness"—indicates more abstract similarity.
 - But, Scripture does not use them as two distinct expressions.
 - They are basically synonymous here; they are combined in order to add intensity to the thought. i.e. "**An image which is like us.**"

- c. We cannot use one word to represent the physical, and the other the spiritual or ethical likeness.
 - d. Nor, can image equal man in his “rational and responsible being” and likeness man in “conformity to the will of God in reality.”
 - e. The different prepositions are not significant either: “in” and “according to”
 - “In” is used in the sense of “according to” in Ex. 25:40 and other places.
 - In 5:3 **the two prepositions are reversed** with the same words image and likeness.
 - f. In 1:27 “image” is used alone as sufficient.
 - g. In 5:1 “likeness” is used alone as sufficient.
2. The **Definition** of the Image of God: we can look at it from functional, formal, and ethical sides.
- FUNCTIONAL**—“He shall have dominion over”
- In one sense this is the **result** of the image of God in man; yet, since this dominion is a primary reflection of God’s attribute of sovereignty, it also becomes a primary factor in fleshing out the image of God concept.
 - We look at this dominion in more detail in the next message.
- FORMAL**—the outward or physical side of the image
- Some deny that man’s body has any part in the image of God concept; but, **man is a unity**; he acts, thinks, and feels with his whole being. Man is a visible expression of the eternal, spiritual Creator.
 - *Man’s body is the fittest receptacle for his spirit and bears analogy to God.*
 - *Both God and angelic beings made appearances in the human body—none other!*
 - **Jesus took on a human body!**
 - God can see, hear, touch, smell, speak in a very real sense; thus, God is not wholly other—we are made in His image.
 - Man’s countenance directs his gaze upward.
 - He has capacity for a great variety of facial expressions.
 - He has articulate speech.
 - He has an upright and dignified walk.
 - There are many other likely possibilities.
- ETHICAL**—the Inward side of the image
- Immortality
 - Self-consciousness and reason, true knowledge
 - Discernment between good and evil
 - Freedom of will [as first created; now distorted!]
 - Conscience
 - Right use of moral capacities—righteousness, holiness, etc.
- All of this shows that man must be taken seriously!**

CONCLUSION

However, the image has been shattered by SIN.

Man’s structural likeness survived the fall—to some degree (See Gen. 9:6; James 3:9)

Man’s spiritual likeness perished—no more true righteousness and holiness, reason perverted, conscience twisted, discernment warped, doomed to death etc.

Man has become a corrupt sinner (Rom. 1-3)! LOOK AT THE HEIGHTS FROM WHICH WE HAVE FALLEN!

But, Christ is the radiance of His glory; the exact representation of His image (Heb. 1:30). **He is the image of God!** (II Cor. 4:4; Col. 1:15.

Through Christ God's image and likeness are restored to us through the New birth and sanctification (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10).

Let us pray David's prayer in Ps. 51:10: "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me."

YOU MUST KNOW THAT YOU ARE UNIQUE, AND THAT YOU MUST THEREFORE BE UNIQUELY DIFFERENT TO GOD'S GLORY.