

Week 13

Man and Creation

Key Verse

Genesis 2:7 Then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living person.

+ Introduction

Some would like to think that man and woman evolved into the species we are today. For those, there seems to be a comfort in believing that it just happened without context or purpose. The theory of evolution teaches that humans resulted from chance events, the outcome of natural selection, and survival of the fittest. ¹ Humanity was not a presupposed idea but rather an evolution of that which existed on its own without form or direction.

However, in our lessons, we have seen that God is a God of order, purpose, and direction. Scripture is a revelation of the fullness and depth of God. And as Genesis clearly points out, God is the Creator. He was not created, but He created all things, including man and woman. Genesis begins with a personal God who deliberately created the universe and made humankind in His image. ²

In chapter 1 of Genesis, God creates the heavens and the earth from a blank canvas. As an artist would take a canvas of nothingness and create a work of unmatched beauty, God does not use a paintbrush, chisel, spinning wheel, or any other apparatus to create; He speaks. God spoke the world into existence. Time and time again, we are told that things came into being because "God said." (Genesis 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 26, 29) Throughout the creation process, God spoke darkness from light, vegetation from the soil, water from dry land, stars, planets, and animals of all kinds. Nothing was created by chance or accident. All were created with deliberation, purpose, with God's spoken word as the ultimate Artist using the proverbial blank canvas.

But that all changed on the day before He rested.

+ Image of God

GENESIS 1:26-27 *Then God said, "Let Us make mankind in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the livestock and over all the earth, and over every crawling thing that crawls on the earth."²⁷ So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.*

Out of all the creatures God made, only one creature, man, is said to be made "in the image of God."³ God wanted man, referring to both male and female, to be made in His image, His likeness. It is clear that animals were created, plants were created, all living things were created, yet none of what had been created was in the likeness of God or in the image of God. On the day before God rested, He created that which would bear His image. Chuck Swindoll makes these comments concerning this passage.

"When God said, "Let us make human beings in our image," He was saying, in effect, "humanity will be unlike anything I have created. No other being has a heart to love Me. No other created being has a mind to know Me or a will to obey Me. Nothing else in all of My creation has a destiny of eternity like these creatures will have. I will make humans distinct. They will have imago Dei, 'the image of God,' stamped on them. Only they will have a capacity within them to love and know and obey Me."⁴

God wanted man to stand out, and as such, He created us differently. We were unique from the beginning. We did not evolve into uniqueness, intellect, or dominion. We were birthed if you will, in the *image of God*, in the *likeness of God*. Both the Hebrew word for "image" (*tselem*) and the Hebrew word for "likeness" (*demut*) refer to something that is similar but not identical to the thing it represents or is an "image" of.⁵

God created us to represent Him. This can only be done by human beings. God created us to reflect His character. His character is creative. His character is loving. His character is forgiving. His character is relational. These characteristics set us apart from other living things. We have the opportunity and responsibility to represent God in His image and likeness. God created us with that purpose in mind.

Look at how God deemed mankind to be worthy of work and dominion over what had been created.

GENESIS 1:28-31 *God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth."²⁹ Then God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of all the earth, and every tree which has fruit yielding seed; it shall be food for you;³⁰ and to every animal of the earth and to every bird of the sky and to everything that moves on the earth which has life, I have given every green plant for food"; and it was so.³¹ And God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.*

God had created them male and female so that they would be fruitful and would multiply. From the beginning, God wanted humanity to grow in number. There is no evolution process described. Mankind was uniquely different from all other created beings and life forms. Notice how the responsibility of man is described in verse 28, *“fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”*

It was not survival of the fittest; instead, it was dominion over creation. God wanted that which was created in His likeness and image to subdue and rule over every other living thing that moves on the earth. There is nothing that was created that would not be under the rule and authority of man, who had been created in the image and likeness of God.

From the onset, God wanted man to have responsibility, authority, and dominion. If you think of it truly as mankind representing God on earth, the choices we make and the rule that we offer should be based on God’s principles and not our own. If we are in God’s likeness and image, we represent God; therefore, our authority over this earth should be clearly in line with God.

We do not rule in isolation. We do not have dominion because of what we have earned. We are in this role because we are created in God’s image and likeness, the One who created the heavens and the earth. We do this as we relate to God and learn more about Him and His principles. God created humans to have community, connection, and communication with the One who fashioned them.⁶ This kind of relationship with God sets us apart from all other creation. We get to be personal and relational with God. We get to know God. We get to learn from God. We get to represent God. There is an intimacy we have with God that no other creation has, and it started when He created us uniquely.

+ Intimacy of God

GENESIS 2:7 *Then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living person.*

Genesis chapter 2 zooms in on this part of creation that was explained as an overview in chapter 1. And in chapter 2, we see the intimacy of God. Notice in verse 7 *“LORD God.”* In chapter 1, God was simply referred to as God, using the Hebrew word *“Elohim,”*⁷ But now we see *LORD God*. When you see *LORD* in all “caps,” it is the Hebrew word for *Yahweh* or *Jehovah*.⁸ We see *LORD God* 11 times in 22 verses in this chapter. *Yahweh* is the personal name of God, the intimate name of God. It would be the difference between Mr. John Smith and simply John. It is more personal, intimate, and accessible.

In chapter 2, we see God getting more personal, intimate, and accessible to His creation. From the beginning, God wanted to be involved. God never intended for His creation to be on cruise control or function like a robot. God created living plants, animals, nutrients that would allow growth for all living creatures.

God did not wait until the New Testament with the birth of Jesus Christ to become personal, intimate, and accessible. God was *Yahweh Elohim* from the very beginning. A personal and intimate God

to His creation. There is a personal intimacy in this chapter as we zoom in on the creation of man that we see nowhere else in the creation story.

There is nothing glamorous about how we were created. God created us from dust. In our culture, we want to get rid of dust. We have brooms, vacuums, mops, and other appropriate items that allow us to remove dust from our homes. We sweep dust from our houses. We wipe the dust from our furniture. We sneeze when there is too much dust. We shed tears when dust gets in our eyes. We do not hold dust in high esteem. For us, dust is a nuisance, messy, and expendable.

However, God made us out of dust. For God, dust became the vessel to create man which was made in His *likeness* and in His *image*. As Creator, God did not see dust to be a nuisance, messy, or expendable. Rather, God saw the value, purpose, and potential of the dust. In the hands of the Artist, the dust was a masterpiece in the making.

Irving Stone wrote a book on Michelangelo called "The Agony and the Ecstasy." There is a portion where he talks about Michelangelo's mentor and a brief lesson from one artist to another.

"Now what is sculpture?" demanded Bertoldo, speaking to Michelangelo, in a mentor's tone. "It is the art which, by removing all that is superfluous from the material under treatment, reduces it to that form designed in the artist's mind." ⁹

God, the Creator, the master Artist, the Sculptor, had spoken into existence the heavens and the earth. The colors of the plants and trees; the diversity of the animals from the elephants and giraffes to the caterpillar that would turn into a butterfly; all came into existence with the spoken word. There was no lack of creativity shown in all creation.

And yet, the Artist, the Sculptor, God Himself, three in one, desired to create once again before He rested. This time instead of speaking, God used dust. The dirt from the foundation of the earth. And God got His hands dirty.

God made man from the dust of the ground. There is a nice play on words in the original Hebrew language. The Hebrew word for *man* is "Adam." The Hebrew word for *ground* is "Adamah." ¹⁰ So God makes Adam out of the dust of Adamah. God chose to use what we literally sneeze at to make the most precious of all creation, that which would be made in His *likeness* and *image*.

GENESIS 2:7 *Then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living person.*

The word "form" in Hebrew is the word "Yatsar," which means to form, fashion, frame. It describes what a potter does with clay in shaping and molding. ¹¹ God literally got His hands dirty when He created man, because He did not speak us into existence, He formed us.

It is the same word that David used in Psalm 139

PSALMS 139:13-14 *For You **formed** my inward parts; You wove me in my mother's womb. ¹⁴ I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; (emphasis added)*

God got personal when He created man. He did not just speak, He interacted. And He has been interacting with us ever since. God formed, shaped, molded man in His image with great care and deliberation. Not necessarily in the physical image, but notice what God does once man is formed that sets us apart even further from all other creation.

| **GENESIS 2:7B** *breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.*

The word used for *breathed* is literally exhaling a breath. But the word for breath of life is the same word used for spirit.¹² This part of creation sets us apart from all other living, breathing creatures. God breathed the “*breath of life*” into us, which made us physical beings and spiritual beings.

We have studied God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We have looked at the Trinity, which can be confusing to understand. We will not dive back into that subject matter, but we are created in the image of God, in the likeness of God. We are unique from all other creations because of that fact.

Being created in the image of God means the fullness of God. God, the Father. God, the Son. God, the Holy Spirit. If you consider mankind to have a mind, body, and spirit; there is a representation of the fullness of God.

- God the Father has the mind of Creator.
- God the Son has the human body of flesh.
- God the Spirit has the breath of life.

So, God breathed not just life but spirit into each one of us. We are reminded with this picture that God wanted to be involved in our lives from the very beginning. He never intended for us to be robots or Him to function as a puppeteer. But God wanted to be relational with mankind. God wanted to be personal and intimate with that which was created in His likeness and His image. And God created the environment, which some might argue to be the “perfect environment” for man.

+ Involvement of Mankind

| **GENESIS 2:8-10** *The LORD God planted a garden toward the east, in Eden; and there He placed the man whom He had formed.⁹ Out of the ground the LORD God caused to grow every tree that is pleasing to the sight and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.¹⁰ Now a river flowed out of Eden to water the garden; and from there it divided and became four rivers.*

But here, we see that God wanted to be involved with mankind, not out in the cosmic space disconnected from His creation. The *LORD God* planted a garden toward the east, in Eden. Hence, we have called it the Garden of Eden.

And the *LORD God* placed man, whom He had formed in His *likeness* and *image*, in the garden. The garden had everything mankind would need, the plants, the fruits, the trees, and the river. Everything that was needed was in the garden.

We are familiar with the story, but I want us to focus on a particular phrase, *"in the midst of the garden."* We might be quick to overlook that phrase. In some translations, it will say *"in the middle of the garden."* The Tree of Life was in the *"midst of the garden."* The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil was in the *"midst of the garden."* Everything that Adam and Eve needed was in the *"midst of the garden."*

All that was good in the world was in the *"midst of the garden."* We also know that all that was bad for them was in the *"midst of the garden"* which we will look at more in a future lesson.

Adam and Eve were to live life in the midst of the garden. The choices they made would be made in the midst of the garden. God set up parameters for them as His creation. We are reminded He wanted to be relational with mankind from the beginning. We are created in the likeness and image of a relational, intimate, accessible God.

In fact, from the very beginning, God gave man responsibility.

GENESIS 2:15 *Then the LORD God took the man and put him into the Garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it.*

Many people think that "work" came after the Fall of Adam and Eve after eating the fruit.

That is not true; God gave mankind responsibility at the very beginning. They were to interact with the garden, to cultivate and keep it. Making sure the soil was tilled, seeds were planted and watered, fruit and produce were harvested. Mankind was to be active and responsible from the start to what God had entrusted them.

Some think that gives us the right to make up our own rules and do whatever we want, when we want. God gave us the garden. God gave us the mind to think. God gave us the responsibility to act. But all of this was given within parameters.

GENESIS 2:16-17 *The LORD God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; ¹⁷ but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die."*

"You are living in the *'midst of the garden,'*" He told them. "Everything you ever need is at your disposal."

You have great freedom. In fact, from any tree of the garden, you may eat freely. It is the ultimate all-you-can-eat buffet.

V. 17 *but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.*

Man is given responsibility – physical responsibility to tend to the garden and cultivate it. Man was to work in a physical way, getting his hands dirty.

But mankind is also given moral responsibility. Mankind had choices to make. Obedience to God leads to life. Disobedience to God leads to death.

God always wanted man to have freedom of choice. We are living, breathing human beings created in the image of God. Mind, Body, and Spirit.

Man came from the dust, the ground. *Adam* came from *Adamah*. Man has the choice of relating more to *creation*, that which comes from the ground; or the choice of relating more to the Creator, the One who created the ground itself.

The choice must be made in the "*midst of the garden*."

It's a choice we must make ourselves every single day as we live life in the "*midst of the garden*." Are we going to choose that which is of this earth or that which is of heaven, God Himself? God, who created us in His *likeness* and *image*. God who breathed life into our beings. As His creation, we have a choice to make.

| **MATTHEW 6:33** 'Seek *FIRST* the Kingdom of God and His righteousness...'

+ Conclusion

The creation of human beings represents God's crowning act in creation. Yet, by his freewill man sinned against God and brought sin into the garden. Only the grace of God can bring mankind into fellowship with Him and enable them to fulfill God's purpose for their lives. The Baptist Faith and Message explains,

"The sacredness of human personality is evident in that God created man in His own image, and in that Christ died for man; therefore, every person of every race possesses full dignity and is worthy of respect and Christian love."¹³

¹ Bill T. Arnold, *Encountering the Book of Genesis*, Baker Books, Grand Rapids, MI, 1998, p.27.

² Ibid.

³ Wayne Grudem, *Bible Doctrine*, Inter-Varsity Press, Nottingham, England; 1999, p. 189.

⁴ Chuck Swindoll, *The Swindoll Study Bible*, Tyndale House Publishers, Carol Stream, IL; 2017, p. 9). ⁵ Wayne Grudem, *Bible Doctrine*, p. 189.

⁶ Chuck Swindoll, *The Swindoll Study Bible*, p. 9.

⁷ www.biblestudytools.com/lexicon

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Irving Stone, *The Agony and the Ecstasy*, Berkley Press, 1987, p. 143.

¹⁰ www.biblestudytools.com/lexicon

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Baptist Faith and Message workbook, p.59.