

Foundations of Christian Theology

Lesson 8

The Creation of Mankind

Goal: To understand the uniqueness of mankind being created in the image of God, and to grow in our desire to reflect that image in our lives.

1. The movement from Theology to Anthropology

The transition from Theology to Anthropology, that is, from the study of God to the study of man is a natural one. Man is not only the crown of creation, but also the object of God's special care. And God's revelation in scripture is a revelation that is not only given to man, but also a revelation in which man is vitally concerned. It is not a revelation of God in the abstract, but a revelation of God to His creatures, and particularly in relation to man. This accounts for the fact that man occupies a place of central importance in scripture, and that the knowledge of man in relation to God is essential to its proper understanding. – Louis Berkhof, "Systematic Theology"

*Ps 8 When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars, which you have set in place,
4 what is man that you are mindful of him,
and the son of man that you care for him?
5 Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings
and crowned him with glory and honor.
6 You have given him dominion over the works of your hands;
you have put all things under his feet,
7 all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field,
8 the birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea,
whatever passes along the paths of the seas.*

Creation's dependence upon man

- The entire created order suffers under man's sin.

Gen 3:17-18 cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; 18 thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you;

- Creation is eagerly longing to be delivered into man's redemption.

Rom 8:19&21 For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God... the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

Man is:

- -the center of creation
- -the apex of the acts of creation
- -the highest order of the creation
- -the focus of God's special care in creation
- -God's ultimate concern in His creation

How does this guide our thinking in what God is doing in redemption?

2. The God who desires to image Himself

WCF CHAPTER 4

Of Creation

*2. After God had made all other creatures, he created man, male and female, with reasonable and immortal souls, endued with knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness, **after his own image**; having the law of God written in their hearts, and power to fulfill it:*

Creator/creature divide

Creator

creature

Yet God desires to image Himself in the creation

*Gen 1:26 "Let us make man in **our** image, after **our** likeness."*

God desires to abundantly display His glory

*Col 1:16&17 For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him **and for him**. 17 And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.*

Rom 11:36 For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.

As there is an infinite fullness of all possible good in God—a fullness of every perfection, of all excellency and beauty, and of infinite happiness—and as this fullness is capable of communication, or emanation ad extra, so it seems a thing amiable and valuable in itself that this infinite fountain of good should send forth abundant streams. . . . Thus it appears reasonable to suppose that it was God’s ultimate end that there might be a glorious and abundant emanation of his infinite fulness of good; and that the disposition to communicate himself, or diffuse his own fulness, was what moved him to create the world.
– Johnathan Edwards, “Ethical Writings”

Man displays God’s glory by being His image bearer

If this is why God created in general, it is, even more so, why He created man specifically.

Man receives the revelation of God’s glory by being His image bearer

Man is uniquely equipped to receive the revelation of God’s glory that is all around him.

Jn 17:3 And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

Gal 4:9 But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and worthless elementary principles of the world

These image bearing attributes enables man to relate to God like no other creature.

- Man was made in the likeness of the knowledge of God so that we might know God.
- Man was made in the likeness of the holiness of God so that we might be holy to God.
- Man was made in the likeness of the spirituality of God so that we might relate to God in spirit and truth.
- Man was made in the likeness of the truthfulness of God so that we might be true to God.
- And man was made in the likeness of the love of God so that we might love God.

Man was created in the likeness and image of His Creator

*Gen 1:20&21 And God said, “Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the heavens.” 21 So God created the great sea creatures and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm, **according to their kinds**, and every winged bird **according to its kind**.*

*Gen 1:24&25 And God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures **according to their kinds**—livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth **according to their kinds**.” And it was so. 25 And God made the beasts of the earth **according to their kinds** and the livestock **according to their kinds**, and everything that creeps on the ground **according to its kind**.*

*Gen 1:26 Then God said, “Let us make man in **our image**, after our **likeness**.”*

Discussion Pause - God desires to reveal Himself for His glory. And He created man, endowed with His image, not only to receive that revealing glory, but to be a major display of that revealing glory. God is mindful of man, and every human life is under the care of the One who truly does care for man. How does this affect our view of the sanctity and value of human life? What different ways can we demonstrate the value and sanctity of human life?

3. Man is a finite creature with an immortal soul

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Of Creation

*2. After God had made all other creatures, he created man, male and female, **with reasonable and immortal souls**, endued with knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness, after his own image; having the law of God written in their hearts, and power to fulfill it:*

This immortal soul is the proper seat of God’s image in man.

The attributes of the soul are the primary qualities of God’s image in man. And these are all things foreign to beasts or birds or fish.

Discussion Pause – Reflect on what it would mean for man to be created holy, sinless in a holy and sinless world. In what ways do you think the image of God would display itself in such a life?

The body and the soul

Man is represented in scripture as being both body and soul.

Gen 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 creature.

Even though Calvin says the soul is the proper seat of the image of God in us, he continues:

Yet there was no part of man, not even the body itself, in which some sparks (of the image of God) did not glow” Calvin’s Institutes 1/15/3

1 Cor 6:19&20 do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, 20 for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

Separation of body and soul at death awaits to be reunited at the resurrection

These two entities of body and soul are separated at death.

Phil 1:21-24 For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. 22 If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. 23 I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. 24 But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account.

This is why Jesus can say to the thief on the cross, *“Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise.” LK 23:43*

The restoration of the brilliance of the image of God in man is the promise we are given in redemption.

The righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Mt 13:43

Christ is the true image of God

Heb 1:3 He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature,

Col 2: 9 In him the fullness of deity dwells bodily

Discussion Pause - Stop and think what we will one day be in Christ. We will be the perfect image bearers of God that we were meant to be in creation. Only now it will be the image of Christ the vine living the fullness of His life and divine image in us, the branches.

How should this affect our lives now? How does this image function in our lives today?

4. Functional outworking of the image of God in man

At creation, the image of God in man is immediately seen in the authority that is afforded man over all other living things.

Gen 1: 26 Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

Functionally, Adam was to live out God’s divine image in the world. God placing him in the garden was seating him in the throne room of his created home, from there to rule as a mirror of the rule of God. And to protect his garden home as a priest over this temple garden. And to manifest the will of God in the garden, spreading it throughout the world as a true prophet of the Most High.

Christ will one day confirm us in that image to brilliantly display that image for eternity.

Looking at God’s attributes to behold our image

By virtue of God creating the image bearing capacity in our immortal souls, the communicable attributes exist in us. Yes, they are tarnished and defiled in us currently, but they still trace a divine image in humanity. Rightly understanding these attributes teach us, not so much that God is like us, but that we are like God. We bear His image in these communicable attributes. And the more we understand these attributes, the greater we will understand the image of God in us.

Christ – the true image of God in humanity

Where do we look to see this image of God in these attributes displayed in humanity? It is in Christ. For in Him, we have the most perfect human display of these communicable attributes to be an example for us to live out that image in our lives.

Rom 8:29 For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

God created man male and female

*After God had made all other creatures, he created man, **male and female**,*

- both men and women are created in the image of God, and therefore both are deserving of the same dignity of being image bearers.
- God created these two image-bearing creatures different from one another.

God created man and woman to complement each other, not just physically, but in a myriad of ways.

Bavinck: the human nature given to man and the woman is one and the same but in each of them it exists in a unique way. And this distinction functions in all of life and in all kinds of activity.”

Men, what does it mean to you that you reflect God’s image in being a man?

Women, what does it mean to you that you reflect God’s image in being a woman?

The union of the two

It is only at the point of the creation of mankind that we behold the Trinitarian interchange in creation reflecting a relational plurality in God.

*Gen 1:26 “Let **us** make man in **our** image, after **our** likeness... So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.”*

As God speaks of Himself in the plural concerning man’s creation, He creates man in the plural.

Gen 2:21-24 So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. 22 And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. 23 Then the man said,

*“This at last is bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
she shall be called Woman,
because she was taken out of Man.”*

*24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife,
and they shall become one flesh.*

At the creation of Eve, God established the covenantal union of marriage. This union depicts a further understanding of God’s image in us. For it depicts the relational completeness of the man and the woman.

God is love. The Father always loves the Son and the Son loves the Father, and the Spirit is the Spirit of love.

Jn 3:35 The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand.

Jn 15:10 If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.

1 Cor 13:5-8 Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; 6 it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. 7 Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Love never ends.

But this class does!

Discussion Questions

- **Inward Application:** How does your makeup as a union between body and soul affect how you pray for yourself or those you love?
- **Outward Application:** How does the image of God in mankind affect the way you talk to unbelievers, especially trying to get conversations toward their need for Jesus?
- **Basic Understanding:** Clarifying questions.
- **Further Understanding:** How does God's creation of mankind as male and female help us understand what it means to "image" God?
- **Reading Scripture:** Genesis 2. How does this shape what we believe about humanity?