



Lesson 2 / February 12, 2017

CREATION OF MANKIND

Genesis 1:26-31

Key Verse

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

Genesis 1:27

Discussion Questions

1. Why do you suppose the Bible gives two accounts of creation?
What does the second account add to the first?
2. In what ways is how God creates humans different from how he creates everything else?
3. What is the *imago Dei*? In what way(s) do people bear God’s image?
4. What is the significance of gender and marriage in Genesis 1-2?
5. How does Genesis 1-2 help me answer the question: Who am I?
6. What are the implications of the *imago Dei* for how we treat other humans?
7. How do we fulfill God’s commands to rule over the earth and to fill the earth with life?

Question 3: How did God create humans?

Short Answer: *God created humans in his own image.*

Full Answer: *God created humans in his own image, male and female, out of dust, with the breath of life, and inherently valuable above all other creatures.*

Question 4: What is God’s first command to humans?

Short Answer: *God first commands humans to rule over the earth and to fill the earth with life.*

Full Answer: *God first commands humans to rule over the earth and to fill the earth with life, through the institution of marriage and with the blessing of God.*

Summary

In the first five and half days of creation, God made the heavens and the earth and all that is in them, including every living creature . . . except humans. Now the creation story takes an interesting turn and becomes about us! It turns out God saved his best work for last. Humans will be his masterpiece, created in an extraordinary way. Genesis 1:26-31 gives us an initial overview of how God creates humans, then Genesis 2 gives a more detailed description of the process involved in God's creation of humans. In the story of how we were made, we find our identity and our value as humans.

In Genesis 1:26, God determines to make humans in an utterly distinctive way, in the image and likeness of God. Throughout history, the church has used the Latin phrase *imago Dei* (= image of God) to refer to this profound concept. As the *imago Dei*, humans will be God's royal representatives in creation. Think of how a king's image appears on coins, statues, and murals throughout his kingdom as symbols and reminders of his reign. Likewise, humans bear God's image within his creation, representing and pointing to the living God who reigns.

Humans bear this image in a variety of ways. In Genesis 1:26, God assigns to humans the function of having dominion over all other living creatures. Even as God reigns over creation, so also humans will reign over creation. Then, in Genesis 1:27, we read again of the *imago Dei*, but this time it is parallel to God creating humans "male and female." God has given humans a special capacity for relationship with one another and for relationship with God, who also has such capacity for relationship. In verse 28, God speaks directly to humans – "And God said *to them*." God does not speak to other creatures; only humans have the capacity for communication and relationship with God. Only humans receive the "breath of life" (Gen 2:7), which may refer to the immortal, invisible spirit humans possess, even as God is the eternal Spirit. And finally, in Genesis 1:28, God assigns to humans a second function. Not only are they to have dominion over the earth, but also they are to fill the earth with human life, even as God has filled

his creation with living creatures. In all these ways (and perhaps more!), humans are like God, bearing his image in creation.

When we turn to Genesis 2, we find a second account of creation with humans at the center. In this account, God first creates the man out of dust, gives him life, places the man in the Garden of Eden, and instructs him to care for the Garden. However, God does not declare his creation to be "good," as he did in Genesis 1. Instead, he declares his creation to be "not good" because the man is alone and in need of a "helper fit for him" (Gen 2:18). The man needs a counterpart, an equal who can partner with him to accomplish together what neither of them can accomplish alone. But among all the living creatures, no suitable helper can be found (Gen 2:19-20). God must create the suitable helper from the man's own flesh (Gen 2:21-23). Finally, man meets woman, romance blossoms, and the first love song is born (Gen 2:23). The first man and woman come together in marriage (Gen 2:24) and God establishes the institution of marriage as the fundamental human relationship by which humans will rule over the earth and fill it with life. Genesis 2 ends with man and woman, husband and wife, living in God's good garden without shame (Gen 2:25). Creation – like the rest of the Biblical story – is strikingly human-centric.

Later in Scripture, we find the Psalmist pondering the question of human identity and value. "What is man," he wonders in Psalm 8:4, "that God is mindful of him?" The answer is found in the unique way God created humans (see Psalm 8:3-8). As humans, our identity is found in the *imago Dei*, and as the *imago Dei*, we have immensely greater value before God than all other creatures. We may kill other living creatures for food, but God absolutely forbids killing another human because they have been made in God's image (Gen 9:6). Every human life is sacred before God regardless of intelligence, wealth, ethnicity, gender, skill, and so forth. If the *imago Dei* is your identity, then you have value before God and he is mindful of you. Yes indeed, *you* have value because God created *you* in his image!