

## WEEK 2 | THE CREATION OF MAN

The entire world is a revelation of God, a mirror of his virtues and perfections; every creature is in his own way and according to his measure an embodiment of divine thought. But among all creatures only man is the image of God, the highest and richest revelation of God, and therefore head and crown of the entire creation.

– Herman Bavinck

### PRELIMINARY CONCERNS

#### I. MAN FOR MANKIND

The common vernacular of using the term “man” as representative of all humanity had come under attack in recent years, both in Bible translation and in broader society. The objection is: since humanity consists of both male and female, it is inappropriate to use “man” to refer to the species as a whole.

To this, we would recognize that this is both a Biblical and historic way of referring to humanity. In the early chapters of Genesis, Moses uses the Hebrew *'ādām* (“man”) to refer to 1) man as distinct from woman as well as 2) mankind in general:

- 1) Genesis 1:27 – So God created man (*'ādām*) in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.
- 2) Genesis 5:1-2 – This is the book of the generations of Adam (*'ādām*). When God created man (*'ādām*), he made him in the likeness of God. <sup>2</sup> Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and named them Man (*'ādām*) when they were created.

Here you can see Moses uses “man” to refer to mankind in general; in 5:1-2, he employs both sense of “man” in the same paragraph. In both passages, “man” includes both male and female. At the same time, man is also distinct from woman, as seen in the following verses:

And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. . . And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed. (2:22, 25)

Here man is shown to be distinct, and distinctly created, from woman. Clearly, the verses above show there is scriptural support for using “man” for mankind/humanity in general.

## II. ADAM AS AN HISTORICAL PERSON

Another debate in Biblical scholarship is over the historicity of the early chapters of Genesis. This, of course, calls into question whether or not Adam is to be understood as a real, historical person, or if he should be understood as a mythical figure representing mankind's development or evolution in some metaphorical way.

The most natural reading of the early chapters of Genesis is to see them as a true description of actual, historical events, including the creation of the world *ex nihilo* and the unique creation of man from "dust from the ground," breathing into man "the breath of life" (2:7). That Adam is an historical person is affirmed in the subsequent narrative. Adam and his wife, Eve, are the parents of Cain, Abel, and Seth (4:1-2, 25). Genesis 5 provides a genealogy of Adam's descendants, with 5:1 reading, "This is the book of the generations of Adam." His lineage is traced all the way to Noah (5:32), also regarded as a real, historical person.

Further, the early chapters of Genesis lack poetic markers that would identify it as something other than a straightforward narration of history, including:

- 1) Parallelism: Hebrew poetry is marked by a tight parallelism in which information is provided in couplets that relate to each other in some way.
- 2) Perfect *vav* conjunction: The Hebrew *vav* conjunction is used in both narrative and poetry, but in different forms or tenses. In poetry the perfect form is used, representing *logical* connection, whereas in narrative the imperfect form is used, representing *sequential* connection. In Genesis 1-3, the imperfect form is used almost exclusively, identifying the section as narrative history.

An example of Hebrew poetry can be found in Psalm 104:5-9, which extols the beauty of God's creative work in creation:

- <sup>5</sup> He set the earth on its foundations,  
so that it should never be moved.
- <sup>6</sup> You covered it with the deep as with a garment;  
the waters stood above the mountains.
- <sup>7</sup> At your rebuke they fled;  
at the sound of your thunder they took to flight.
- <sup>8</sup> The mountains rose, the valleys sank down  
to the place that you appointed for them.
- <sup>9</sup> You set a boundary that they may not pass,  
so that they might not again cover the earth.

Any reader can see the difference in both form and style between this account of creation and that given in Genesis 1 and 2. Because Genesis 1 and 2 are clearly written to be understood as

true, accurate historical narrative, we must also regard Adam as a real, historical figure, something the New Testament repeatedly affirms:

- 1) Luke 3:38 (cf. 1 Chronicles 1:1) – . . . the son of Enos, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God.
- 2) Romans 5:14 – Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one to come.
- 3) 1 Corinthians 15:22, 45 – For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. . . Thus it is written, ‘the first man Adam became a living being;’ the last Adam became a life-giving spirit.
- 4) 1 Timothy 2:13-14 – For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor.
- 5) Jude 14 – It was also about these that Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied. . .

The clear and consistent testimony of Scripture is that Adam was the first human, a historical figure uniquely created by God in the beginning.

## **MAN AS CREATED BEING**

The account of man’s creation is given in Genesis 1-2, an account that echoes throughout the entirety of Scripture. In understand what man is and what his purpose is, we must begin with these foundational texts.

### **I. HIS ORIGIN**

We begin in chapter 2, where Moses focuses in on the sixth day of creation and gives a more detailed account of the creation of man.

#### **A. Created**

In Genesis 1:26 we see a divine deliberation, in which God takes counsel with Himself, saying, “Let us make man. . .” Then, in verse 27, Moses poetically tells us that God “created man.” The first quality of man to be recognized is his creatureliness. Man, like everything else in the universe, was created by God according to God’s own free will and purpose. Central to what man is, is that he is a created being.

Genesis 2:7 gives a more explicit account of God’s creation of Adam:

. . . 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.

Here we see that God “formed” man from the “dust from the ground.” The word “formed” is used to give great color to God’s creative act. Elsewhere it is used to describe:

- 1) A potter’s activity – Isaiah 29:16; Jeremiah 18:4-6
- 2) Making wooden images – Isaiah 44:9-10; Habakkuk 2:18
- 3) God forming Israel (Isaiah 27:11; 45:9, 11); the servants of the Lord (Isaiah 49:5; Jeremiah 1:5); the natural world (Psalm 95:5; Isaiah 45:18; Amos 4:13); Leviathan (Psalm 104:26).

No other act of God’s creation is described in such a personal, intimate way. Moses uses this language to show that the creation of man was unique out of all God’s creative work. Indeed, the flow of Genesis 1 climaxes in the formation of man, showing that he is the pinnacle of God’s creation. Hence David’s question in Psalm 8, “What is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?” (Psalm 8:4). Scripture repeatedly affirms that God created man:

- 1) Genesis 5:1-2 – This is the book of the generations of Adam. When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. Male and female he created them, and blessed them and named them Man when they were created.
- 2) Job 33:6 – Behold, I am toward God as you are; I too was pinched off from a piece of clay.
- 3) Psalm 8:5 – Yet you have made [man] a little lower than the heavenly beings. . .
- 4) Matthew 19:4 – [Jesus] answered, “Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female. . .”
- 5) Acts 17:25-26 - . . . [God] himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place. . .
- 6) Colossians 1:16 – For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominion or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him.

## **B. From Dust**

Genesis 2:7 goes on to tell us that God formed man from “dust of the ground.” This is in contrast to His creation of the universe *ex nihilo*, “from nothing,” as described in Genesis 1:1. When God says, “Let there be light,” there appeared light where before there was an absolute absence of light. When God created man, He works from preexisting material—dust. Even the Hebrew word for man, *'ādām*, is derived from the Hebrew word for ground, *'ādāmah*.

That man’s origin is from the ground itself is affirmed throughout Scripture. In the curses of Genesis 3, God tells man that because he listened to his wife and ate the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil,

“By the sweat of your face  
you shall eat bread,  
till you return to the ground,  
for out of it you were taken;  
for you are dust,  
and to dust you shall return.” (3:19)

The ultimate curse of sin is death, a return to the ground from which man was made. That man is dust and returns to dust is reiterated by later authors of Scripture:

- 1) Genesis 18:27 – Abraham answered and said, “Behold, I have undertaken to speak to the Lord, I who am but dust and ashes.
- 2) Job 10:9 – “Remember that you have made me like clay; and you will return me to the dust?”
- 3) Job 20:11 – “His bones are full of his youthful vigor, but it will lie down with him in the dust.”
- 4) Job 21:26 – “They lie down alike in the dust, and the worms cover them.”
- 5) Job 34:15 – “all flesh would perish together, and man would return to dust.”
- 6) Psalm 22:15 – “my strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to my jaws; you lay me in the dust of death.”
- 7) Psalm 90:3 – You return man to dust and say, “Return, O children of man!”
- 8) Psalm 103:14 – For he knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust.
- 9) Ecclesiastes 3:20 – All go to one place. All are from the dust, and to dust all return.

10) 1 Corinthians 15:47-48 – The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. As was the man of dust, so also are those who are of dust. . .

Genesis 2:7 also describes the constitution of man, denoting both material (“dust of the ground”) and immaterial (“the breath of life”) aspects, something that will be discussed more in a later lecture. For our purposes here, seeing that God breathes “the breath of life” into Adam so that he “became a living creature” reminds us that our live and existence are derived from God. Apart from God granting life, humanity would not be. Paul recognized this, telling the Athenians that in God “we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28). He charges Timothy to be faithful in ministry “in the presence of God, who gives life to all things” (1 Timothy 6:13). Part of our creatureliness is our dependence on God for life. God, in contrast, is independent and self-existent, having all life in Himself (John 5:26).

### **C. In a Garden, On the Sixth Day**

Man was a created a physical being, made from preexisting physical material—dust. Because he is a physical being, he needs a physical location in which to exist. Genesis 2:8-14 describe the creation of Eden and the garden in which God will place man to dwell. Further, we are told that man was created by God on the sixth day of creation, marking a beginning to man’s existence. Man’s life is marked by the passage of time with a definite terminus date—death, the consequence of sin.

Though these details may seem a tangential and insignificant detail, they are important in recognizing man’s creatureliness. Part of what it means to be a creature is to be bound by space and time, at the mercy of the laws of this physical universe. This distinguishes us from God, who created time and space, and is bound by neither. Part of what it means to be God is to be both omnipresent and eternal. God is transcendent, a Being utterly unlike us, His creatures.

### **D. Male and Female**

In both Genesis 1 and 2 we see that God creates mankind as both male and female. In Genesis 1:17 Moses records,

So God created man (*'ādām*) in his own image,  
in the image of God he created him;  
male and female he created them. (1:27)

“Man,” then, is comprised of two sexes, male and female. Once again, where Genesis 1 is brief and concise, Genesis 2 provides more color and detail. Whereas man was created from the dust of the ground, woman is created from the side or rib of man:

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. And the rib that the LORD

God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man (Genesis 2:21-22).

The woman is created because it is not good for man to be alone (Genesis 2:18); as Old Testament scholar Gordon Wenham puts it, “Isolation is not the divine norm for human beings; community is the creation of God.” God creates the woman to be “a helper,” that is one who provides support and assistance, “fit for him,” literally meaning ‘like opposite to him.’ This emphasizes that man and woman are both human, but they are distinct from one another—they are of the same essence but diverse in their makeup and roles.

Like the narration of man’s creation, Moses describes God’s creation of woman in intimate detail. The word “made” comes from the Hebrew *bānāh*, literally “to build.” It evokes the language of a master craftsman carefully creating something beautiful and unique. For his part, the man immediately recognizes the beauty and complementarity of woman, calling her “bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh” (Genesis 2:23). He recognizes that God has provided the perfect partner for him.

In creating man and woman in distinct ways, God introduces a hierarchy into creation—God is head over all, man is head over woman, and man and woman are to be over all the animals God has made. Paul recognizes this hierarchy when he writes, “But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God. . . . For man was not made from woman, but woman from man. Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man” (1 Corinthians 11:3, 8-9). Male and female are complementary, each having their unique roles in God’s economy for mankind.

## II. HIS IMAGE

It is now time to turn our attention back to the brief yet significant account of man’s creation given in Genesis 1:26-28:

<sup>26</sup> 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.”

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

<sup>28</sup> And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

The importance of these verses is evident in the text, which slows down from its rapid-fire account of the first five days of creation given previously; Moses zeroes in on the creation of man. Further, only in creating man does God enter into divine deliberation with Himself, indicated when He says “Let us make.” That this act is significant becomes clear in when God determines He will make man “in our image, after our likeness.” This is the central significance of these verses, repeated three times to add emphasis (“in our image,” “in his own image,” “in the image of God”). Verse 27 is constructed chiasmatically with “image” at its center, again highlighting its importance:

A So God created man  
    B in his own image,  
    B' in the image of God  
A' he created him

Verse 26 uses two words, “image” and “likeness.” The Hebrew *selem*, translated as “image,” is derived from a root word meaning “to carve” or “to cut.” The Hebrew *d<sup>e</sup>mut*, translated as “likeness,” is itself derived from a root meaning “to be like.” When combined, they roughly give the idea of “an image which is like us.” They indicate that, in some way, man is a representation of who God is and what He is like.

At the same time, though they have slightly different nuances, the parallelism of the passage indicates we should largely treat them as synonymous—two ways of saying the same thing. Later uses of the terms in Genesis affirm this:

- 1) Genesis 1:27 only image is used
- 2) Genesis 5:1 only likeness is used
- 3) Genesis 5:3 both image and likeness are used in reverse order
- 4) Genesis 9:6 only image is used

The use of this language and its sheer repetition in the early chapters of Genesis points to how significant this theological concept is. Man is made in the image of God. We can understand the image of God with three words: 1) Reflect, 2) Relate, 3) Represent.

### **A. Reflect**

First, we see that man reflects God in a way that nothing else in creation does. From the context, we see that man does this by reflecting the nature of God as a plurality in unity. In verse 26, God’s divine deliberation, “Let us make man in our image,” alludes to something unique about His nature—though there is one God, He exists in plurality. It would be a stretch to see in this

verse the doctrine of the Trinity, but certainly later revelation makes clear what is only alluded to here. God does not, nor has He ever, existed in solitude. From eternity past He has existed in joyous fellowship and community within the godhead.

In the same way, man is a plurality in unity, having been made “male and female.” As Anthony Hoekema writes, “Human beings reflect God, who exists not as a solitary being but as a being in fellowship—a fellowship that is described at a later stage of divine revelation as that between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.” Mankind reflects this plurality in unity by the existence of male and female who both make up the human race.

There are other ways in which mankind reflects God that are not emphasized in this passage. Man is a personal, moral being, which is why he can bear the responsibility of ruling over creation (which we will address momentarily). Man is also thoughtful, capable of the kind of self-contemplation we see God engaging in here. Man’s constitution, his ability to reason, his ability to transcend his own being in his thoughts, his ability to formulate and communicate complex ideas—all these things are unique to man amongst the creatures God made, and they reflect the Creator in a unique way.

## **B. Relate**

In Genesis 5:1-3 Moses begins what will be an extensive genealogy, tracing man’s lineage from Adam, the first man, all the way to Noah and his sons ten generations later. These first verses echo the description of man’s creation given in chapter 1: “This is the book of the generations of Adam. When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and named them Man when they were created” (5:1-2). Thus, we see that Adam is “in the likeness of God.”

In verse 3, Moses uses this same language to describe Adam’s relationship to his son Seth, writing, “Adam. . . fathered a son in his likeness, after his image, named Seth.” That Moses uses the terms “image” and “likeness” to describe how Seth relates to his father Adam is no accident. He is demonstrating that Adam—and, by extension, all human beings made in God’s image—relate to God in the way a child does to their Father. Part of being made in God’s image is that we were made to enjoy a paternal relationship with God the Father.

The setting of Eden is also indicative of this. There exist strong parallels between it and the later tabernacle and temple. For example:

- 1) The description of YHWH’s walking “to and fro” in Eden (Genesis 3:8) is also used to describe the divine Presence in the later tent sanctuaries (Leviticus 26:12; Deuteronomy 23:15; 2 Samuel 7:6-7).
- 2) Eden’s eastward orientation corresponds to the eastward orientation of the tabernacle.

- 3) The lushness of Eden as a well-watered garden with fruit-bearing trees—especially the tree of life in the midst of it—finds correspondence with the fullness of life associated with the tabernacle, including the menorah as a stylized tree of life.
- 4) Gold and onyx are reminiscent of the tabernacle’s furnishings and priestly garments (Exodus 25:1-9)
- 5) Gold overlays the sacred furniture in the tabernacle (Exodus 25:11, 17, 24, 31)
- 6) In Genesis 2:6, 10-14 we see that a spring-fed river runs through the garden and then flows down from Eden, branching into four riverheads to water the rest of the earth. Water always flows downhill. Later visions of the eschatological temple include a river flowing out of the holy of holies (Ezekiel 47; cf. Psalm 46:5)

As L. Michael Morales writes, “While Genesis 1 portrays creation as a tabernacle, Genesis 2-3 portrays the Garden of Eden as something of an archetypal holy of holies—the place of most intimate communion and fellowship with YHWH God,” something the author of Jubilees affirmed (Jubilees 8:19). These parallels allude to the purpose God had for man when He created him, namely, that in the garden man would enjoy the presence and fellowship of God. In Genesis 3 we see “the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day” (Genesis 3:8). The tense of the verb “walking” indicates this was a habitual practice. In other words, it was normal and expected that each day, in the cool of the day, God would walk with man in the garden and commune with him.

While sin has tarnished this image and severed man’s relationship with God, the goal of salvation is a complete restoration of this relationship. In his genealogy Luke refers to Adam as “the son of God” (Luke 3:38), a title that is applied to Israel in the Old Testament (Exodus 4:22). However, whereas Adam and Israel fail as God’s son, the eternal Son of God, Jesus Christ, will succeed, living a life of perfect obedience and dying a sacrificial death on behalf of God’s people. Thus, “to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God” (John 1:12). This is a restoration of the relationship Adam enjoyed with God. It is, in Paul’s words, reconciliation (Romans 5:10).

### **C. Represent**

The final aspect of bearing God’s image is that Adam and Eve were created to represent God in the world. As God’s Son, Adam was to represent God to the world. In our text in Genesis 1 we see that Adam and Eve were to rule over creation and have dominion:

- 1) Genesis 1:26 – “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.”

- 2) Genesis 1:28 – “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

Twice, God commands man to “have dominion” over creation. He was to “fill” the earth and to “subdue it.” That is, Adam and Eve were to fill the earth with image-bearers who would exercise God’s rule as Lord of creation on His behalf. In the Ancient Near East it was common for conquering kinds to erect a statue of themselves in conquered lands, symbolizing their authority over that region—a practice that may be a faint echo of God’s installation of Adam as His vice-regent and representative over creation.

In Psalm 8 David echoes this representative role of man when he writes, “You have given him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet” (Psalm 8:6). This was to be man’s role in creation. In commenting on these verses in Genesis, Anthony Hoekema writes,

In giving this blessing, God promises to enable human beings to propagate and bring forth children who fill the earth; he also promises to enable them to subdue the earth and to have dominion over the animals and over the earth itself. Though these words are called a blessing, they also contain a commandment or a mandate. God commands man to be fruitful and to have dominion. This is commonly called the *cultural mandate*: the command to rule the earth for God, and to develop a God-glorifying culture.

Man was created in God’s image to represent Him in creation and to rule on His behalf. Once again, Moses gives more detail to this task in Genesis chapter 2 where we are told God “put [man] in the garden to work it and keep it” (Genesis 2:15). The combination of the Hebrew words “work” and “keep” is used almost exclusively in context of the Levitical priesthood and their role of service in the tabernacle and later temple:

- 1) Num 3:7-8 – They shall keep guard over him and over the whole congregation before the tent of meeting, as they minister at the tabernacle. <sup>8</sup> They shall guard all the furnishings of the tent of meeting, and keep guard over the people of Israel as they minister at the tabernacle.
- 2) Num 18:7 – And you and your sons with you shall guard your priesthood for all that concerns the altar and that is within the veil; and you shall serve. I give your priesthood as a gift, and any outsider who comes near shall be put to death.

Just as the priests and Levites were to cultivate and guard the place where God’s presence was manifest among Israel, so Adam as God’s image-bearer was to act in a mediatorial role between God and creation, cultivating and protecting God’s world from any evil or ungodly force. Clearly, bearing God’s image carries great responsibility, responsibility which Adam failed to

uphold but which Jesus Christ, “the image of the invisible God” (Colossians 1:15), upheld perfectly.

That we are image-bearers is what gives humanity intrinsic value and meaning above any other creature. The authors of Scripture will often ground moral instruction regarding mankind in the fact that humanity bears God’s image:

- 1) Genesis 9:5-6 – <sup>5</sup> And for your lifeblood I will require a reckoning: from every beast I will require it and from man. From his fellow man I will require a reckoning for the life of man.

<sup>6</sup>“Whoever sheds the blood of man,  
by man shall his blood be shed,  
for God made man in his own image.

- 2) James 3:9-10 – With [the tongue] we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so.

From these verses it becomes clear that the image of God has significant moral implications. The reason it is wrong to kill or curse another human being is because they bear God’s image and likeness. In other words, what gives mankind unparalleled intrinsic value among all of creation is that mankind alone was made in the image of God. This dictates how Christians think about things like abortion, euthanasia, the death penalty, and countless other social issues. Clearly, a Biblical anthropology is a practical necessity.