

## **Back to Genesis “In His Image”**

**Intro:** Today in our society, there are many debates about various issues. There are the issues of the existence of God debate and the role of religion in public life centering in discussions like evolution vs. intelligent design, separation of church and state and the balance between establishment of religion and free exercise of religion. There are life and death issues centering in discussions about abortion, euthanasia, capital punishment, and carnal warfare. There are gender issues centered in discussions about marriage, roles of persons in marriage, and homosexuality. There are environmental issues centered in discussions about man’s role in the world and the rights of animals. It is interesting that in a way all of these issues take us back to Genesis, to the beginning of all things.

There are several important truths made known in the first chapters of Genesis that help us answer these questions. Last week we considered the great fact of God’s existence and the creation of the heavens and the earth including mankind. This fact lays the foundation for a proper world view and proper understanding life’s meaning and purpose. But now let’s focus on another verse that will help us address some of the fundamental questions of life.

*Then God said, “Let Us make man 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 cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth. And God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. (Genesis 1:26-27)*

**What does it mean to be created in the image and likeness of God?**

***Let’s first take a look at the two terms, “In our image” and “according to our likeness”.***

The terms “image” and “likeness” are virtually synonymous.

The first conveys the idea of “representation”. Often in the OT, idols were called “images” because they were “representations” of a god. So mankind (and this includes both sexes) is made in the “image” of God.

The second phrase conveys the idea of “similarity” (i.e. mankind possesses similar features or characteristics to God).

***It is interesting that God never stops to explain what that means. It is as if He knew that we would be able to identify how we are like Him and in what sense we share His image.***

Clearly the image and likeness is not physical. The bodies of the first human pair were made from the dust that God Himself created and which He pre-existed.

The image and likeness is not merely the animating principle that makes us living beings; for that we also share with the plants and animals God made.

The image and likeness is not merely the seat of impulse or desire that characterizes both animals and man and in Hebrew is called in Hebrew "nephesh."

The image and likeness we bear of God must be in our spiritual nature. Any breakdown will be to some degree arbitrary; but we might describe the image and likeness in this way: We possess:

Intelligence--Like God, man has the capacity for reason. He is endowed with substantial mental abilities. He is able to plan, reason, and create.

A Moral consciousness--Like God, man has a moral nature. He possesses self-consciousness. He can evaluate his behavior, and choose good or evil.

A Relational nature-- And like God, man is a social being. Just as God finds objects for His love, so members of the human race seek companionship and exhibit love.

Or to put it another way, God is spirit, God is light, God is love. All of these have a representation in man.

***But what are the implications of this statement for our world?***

**By this decree God reveal the intended purpose of man's creation.**

***Mankind was made for a relationship with God.***

By sharing the image of God he was able to maintain a unique relationship with the Creator. He could understand God's revelation. He could appreciate God's laws. He could choose to love God. And even when that image was marred by man's fall into sin, we can see clearly that it is the "image of God" to which God still seeks to restore mankind.

*Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices, and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him (Colossians 3:9-10)*

***Here is where God meets the philosopher and addresses the most fundamental question of life: Why did God make man? And answer rings clearly, "We were made to know and act out of the image God instilled within us. We were made for a relationship with God."***

**By this decree God established mankind's unique place in the creation.**

***The principle of the sanctity of human life is derived from this statement.***

***By sanctity we mean that God set apart human life as distinct from all other life. This truth has important implications in our world.***

***Because man is made in the image of God he has been given dominion over the earth.***

*And 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."*

Here is where God meets both the scientist and the environmentalist. Man is given the authority to be the caretaker of the planet. He may use his intellect to study the world God has made and harness through technology the resources it contains.

But at the same time he is to be a caretaker or steward of the creation, using it for his benefit while not destroying the creation God has made.

***Because man was made in the image of God he may make use of the plants and animals for his benefit.***

*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; and to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the sky and to every thing that moves on the earth which has life, I have given every green plant for food"; and it was so. (Genesis 1:28-30)*

Later God granted additional permission to eat the flesh of animals. *Every moving thing that is alive shall be food for you; I give all to you, as I gave the green plant. Only you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood. (Genesis 9:3-4)*

Here where God meets the animal rights activists. By God's decree man has permission to make use of the plant and animal population for his benefit and for food.

**By this decree God made human life special and protected it by laws that preserve life and personal freedom.**

***The sanctity of human life has been from the beginning the moral ground of all spiritual and civil laws that protect life, personal freedom and property.***

**When Cain contemplated taking his brother's life, God solemnly warned him:**

*If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it. (Genesis 4:7)*

The sanctity of human life was the root of laws against murder, kidnapping, rape, and other forms of violence against fellow-man.

***Here is where God meets those who advocate the "right" to take life through abortion, infanticide, euthanasia, or any other kind of "mercy" killing.***

***God's law protect innocent at all stages of the life continuum. No logical approach can establish the right to take the life of the unborn that will not also grant freedom to take the life of another at any other stage of the life continuum.***

***Take away that foundation and there is no basis of protection other than who happens to have the most power in society.***

**By this decree God authorizes holding accountable and punishing by death those who disregard the sanctity of human life.**

***When the alliance of kings took Abram's nephew Lot and others captive, Abram is portrayed as acting in keeping with the principles of God's law in going to their rescue, even though the event involved the shedding of the blood of the guilty kidnappers.***

*And he divided his forces against them by night, he and his servants, and defeated them, and pursued them as far as Hobah, which is north of Damascus. (Genesis 14:15)*

***Though God initially punished the first murderer by separating him from society, after the escalating violence of the flood, He authorized punishment by death to those who take the life of others.***

*And surely I will require your lifeblood; from every beast I will require it. And from every man, from every man's brother I will require the life of man. Whoever sheds man's blood by man his blood shall be shed, for in the image of God He made man. (Genesis 9:5-6)*

***The ground of this law is the decree of creation that man was made in the image of God.***

**This is where God meets the person who contends for the preservation of the guilty.**

**Some argue that because man was made in the image of God, the guilty should not be punished. This is the opposite application that God made. He said, because man is made in the image of God, the guilty must be punished! And his law upholds this principle throughout Scripture!**

**Conclusion: When we see the implications of the creation account you can understand why so many people push so hard to remove God from public life and eliminate at every turn the proclamation of the creation. It gets in the way of almost every sinful agenda that comes down in the pike. We must not be intimidated; but instead to boldly proclaim the truths of Genesis. The well-being and survival of our society depends upon it!**